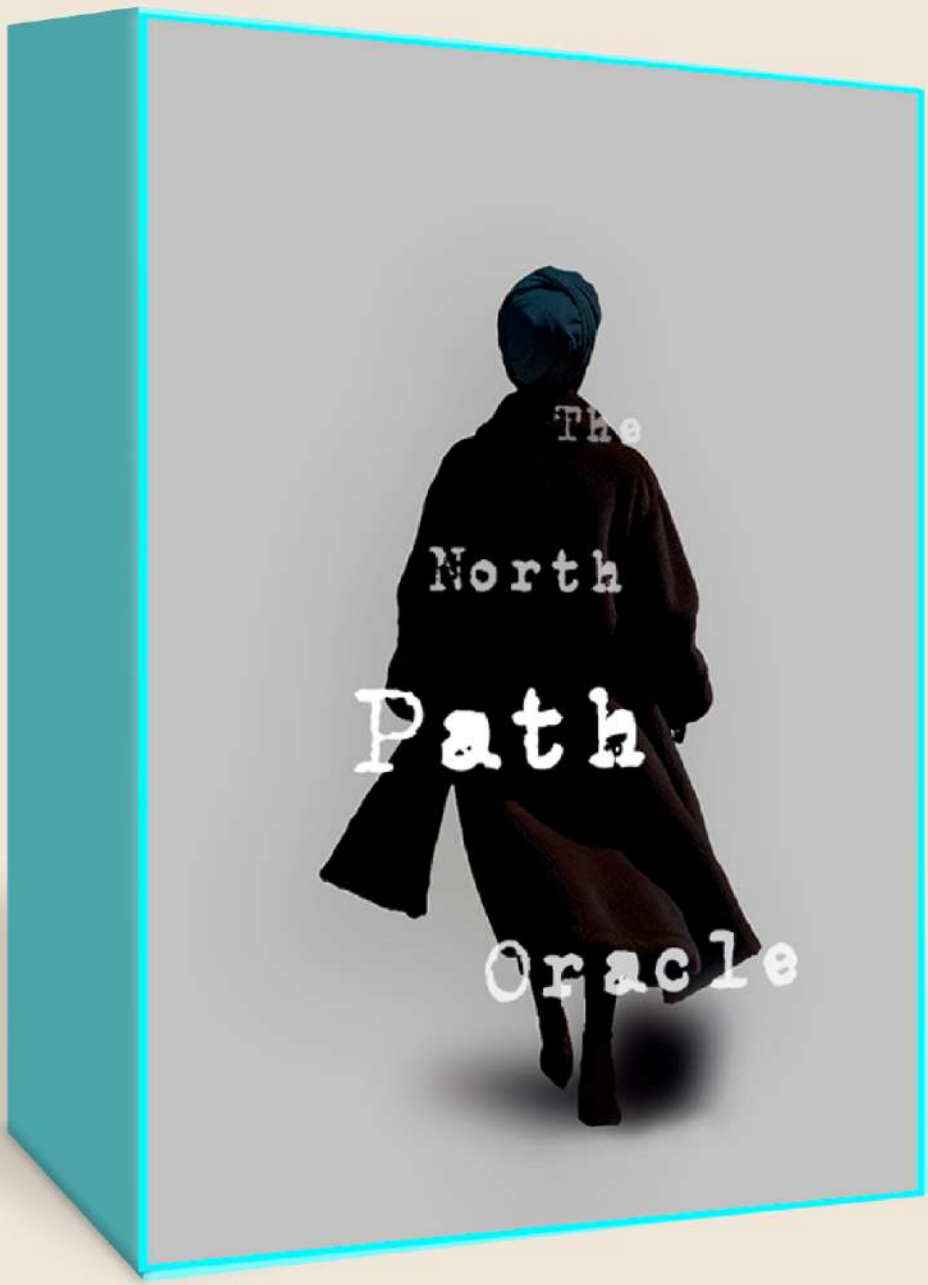

The
North
Path
Oracle

THE NORTH PATH ORACLE

Dear reader, I am very glad that you have opened this guide. It means that the North Path Oracle has found its person.

This deck is designed for working with crisis. By that, I mean a state where you find yourself in a dead end. The old no longer works. And the new is not yet there. And so you stand in this strange space, wanting either to pretend that everything is fine, or to go back to those distant, bright times when everything was good, clear, and simple. Or to disappear. The future seems foggy and frightening. It is frightening to step into the new — it is unknown, and no one offers any guarantees of success.

And that is when we could use someone or something that could symbolically place a hand on your shoulder and say: "You know, it's all right. I've been there before. You are entering a very interesting stage — a complete life reset. You are going to learn a great deal about yourself and about the world. Difficulties, mistakes, and doubts are part of the path. The main thing is not to be afraid. Here is a map with a compass. Just go, and know that you will certainly find your way out."

I began working on it in January 2026. Right when my own life was undergoing a complete reset. It is partly based on my personal experience. But for the most part, my hand seemed to write on its own, and the images came from somewhere "above." As if Providence itself were telling me about them.

The Oracle consists of two parts that complement each other. The first part is the Stations. The archetypal "stations" of any deep crisis or transformation — objective stages of the journey, which show which "archetypal station" of crisis (or deep transformation) you are at, what lessons you are learning, and what to pay attention to.

The second part is the Panopticon. The Museum of Absurdities — fears, delusions, mistaken strategies that we unconsciously apply along this path.

So, let us get to the essence.

THE STATIONS: FOUR CYCLES OF TRANSFORMATION

The 20 cards you are about to see form the Core of the Oracle. They are arranged in a **Spiral of Development**, consisting of four archetypal cycles, with 5 cards in each. Every deep rebirth passes through this Spiral.

Let's be clear right away: the cards of the Stations are neither a verdict nor praise. They are objective coordinates that show which turn of the Development Spiral you are on. At a moment when external supports have collapsed and others' blueprints no longer work, it is especially important to view the entire crisis process from a higher perspective. This will transform wandering into a pilgrimage and exploration, and falling into feeling for a foothold from which to push off.

Therefore, there are no "bad" cards here. There are stages that require different kinds of "breathing."

The first cycle is "Inside the System." It includes cards 1 through 5. This cycle is about how we unconsciously embed ourselves into ready-made structures, rules, and traditions, renouncing the right to our own path in exchange for the illusion of security and belonging; and about the first painful glimmer of understanding how this insidious deal destroys us, and about the death of innocence.

The second cycle is "The Trial of Freedom." It includes cards 6 through 10. It's about the first taste of freedom and what happens when that freedom turns into an illusion and shatters against reality; how euphoria gives way to sobriety; how attempts to build a new reality fail, and you are faced, perhaps for the first time, with difficult moral choices.

The third cycle is "The Backslide." It includes cards 11 through 15. It shows how, frightened by freedom and its consequences, you again reach for old patterns, making various attempts to reconcile with the system; to find shortcuts to eternal happiness, which somehow lead to rock bottom.

The fourth cycle is "The Second Birth." It includes cards 16 through 20. It's about how you become an adult. And this is not a forced compromise between victim and system. But a way out beyond familiar definitions; a search for new meanings; an understanding of your own nature and the conscious construction of your own world.

RECURRING SYMBOLS

"The Stations" is interwoven with three recurring symbols — images that pass from card to card, reflecting the metamorphoses of the heroine's inner world. They are the Plant, the Idol, and the Snow.

The Plant is a metaphor for the Soul. Why a plant? Because, like the soul, it is a living structure, undergoing a complete cycle of development: from seed to sprout, flowering, fruiting, and withering.

However, on the cards, this symbol appears not as a seed, but as a cut bouquet. This is the setup of the drama. The flowers are beautiful, but their life cycle is interrupted: deprived of roots, they are doomed to wither quickly. It is this withering that we observe throughout almost the entire second cycle of the deck.

The natural evolution of the soul is only triggered in the fourth cycle, when the heroine finally returns the plant to its native environment — planting it in the soil. And then, from a tiny sprout, a whole garden grows.

Fruits appear in the Stations only once – on the "May-December Romance" card. Moreover, they are spoiled. Leaping ahead a little, I'll say that the theme of spoiled fruits will be fully developed in the Panopticon scenario "Valuable Person."

So, the evolution of the Plant is from a cut flower to a garden. Between these poles lies the story of a soul that lost its roots, tried to live without them, met with failure, and one day decided to put them down again.

The Idol is a metaphor for the System. The System is multifaceted and all-encompassing. It is life according to imposed standards: society's expectations, family pressure, traditions. But above all, it is deeply ingrained, unconscious behavioral patterns implanted in us by significant people in early childhood. We don't remember this period, but it is then that the foundation is laid that influences us for our entire lives. This is precisely why the Idol is covered in mysterious symbols. They carry no conscious meaning but are perceived as something sacredly important.

The list of the System is open: it includes everything that erases individuality.

Why an Idol specifically? Because it is as ancient as the system itself. It is made of stone — rigid, unchanging, and non-living. But the main thing is that it possesses power. The Idol demands sacrifices and devotion, and it is very difficult to get rid of.

On the cards of the "Stations" the Idol remains unchanged. It is not he who evolves, but the heroine's perception of him. From an external object of worship, he becomes a part of her: a shadow on the snow, an inner critic, a print on a jacket lapel, a burnt mark on the throat, a white blindfold with illegible script. The secret is that the Idol does not disappear — he transforms.

At the end of the path, his image undergoes an alchemical transmutation. The Idol ceases to be an idol, turning into a Tōrō lantern — a symbol of reinterpreted and ecologically integrated power. Its new meaning is light that dispels darkness. It embodies warmth, illumination, and the connection between a person and higher forces.

Snow is metaphor for the challenge that life throws at the heroine. It is what she walks through: crisis, pain, searching, choice, growing up. It is not a backdrop, but an active environment that shapes the soul.

Why snow specifically?

Clarity. Snow does not forgive illusions. It is brutally honest: it won't hide an abyss and won't pretend to be warm. You can't deceive a crisis either with phrases like "everything will work itself out."

Resilience. You can't cancel snow by saying, "That's it! I'm not playing this game anymore! Give me summer!" But you can "dress for the weather" — accept the conditions and walk the path without trying to deny them.

Humility before power. You cannot defeat a snowstorm — you can only wait it out. You cannot instantly break your patterns, but you can see them and allow them to transform.

If snow disappears from a card, it is a sign. The heroine has fallen out of reality, retreated into illusion, tries to deny her path. But the Northern Path is not a battle with snow. It is the art of learning to live within it.

THE AESTHETIC OF THE STATIONS

"The Stations" is not just a deck of cards, but a novel in which the heroine has a face, a character, and a destiny.

Her image formed in my mind from memories of women from the Jewish quarter. I remembered that expression on their faces, looking at old photographs. She is a little over forty — half her life is still ahead. But it is the year 1939.

Why this particular year?

It was a time when the world, as if on command, went mad. Everywhere, the power of the Idol triumphed. The cult of personality bloomed, lush and poisonous. Ideas that entered the minds of ordinary people from the outside proved capable of turning them into monsters.

It was a time when trains carried people not home, but to gas chambers. When families were forcibly destroyed, lives were taken. What had seemed unshakable just yesterday crumbled to dust. It was a time of madness, inhumanity, all-encompassing fear, but also of immense spiritual strength — the kind born only through destruction and pain.

Sometimes this crisis occurs within a person's soul: supports collapse, life takes away what is most precious. But then, ultimate clarity arrives. And it is precisely then — in the cold, in the wind, under foreign banners — that you begin to search for higher meanings, in order to survive and build new walls.

1. Dogma

"I believe. Sincerely, deeply, all the way down. The world I'm part of gives me answers to all my questions. And in return, I give myself to it. I don't yet know that the blindfold on my head isn't protection, but a cage I carry inside."

IMAGE: A frosty, sunny day. From the card, a girl looks at you, smiling as easily and happily as if the world were beautiful and her whole life lay ahead of her. In her hands, she holds a small bouquet of forget-me-nots. On her head is a white blindfold, marked with strange symbols resembling ancient writings. Behind the girl stands a crowd of people with bouquets of flowers, which they are about to lay at the feet of a huge stone effigy of an ancient god or idol. It is entirely covered in the same mysterious symbols as those on the girl's blindfold.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the voluntary and happy dissolution into a system, when we accept others' rules as truth and surrender our soul in exchange for a sense of belonging and security. The rules of life we absorb, often without noticing, become part of us: "this is how it should be," "this is what's done," etc. We don't consider that there might be another way. The world seems clear, and we feel we're in our rightful place within it. We gladly give ourselves to the system (family, bosses, partner, country) and feel warmth and pride from it: "We're not slaves, we're willing and happy participants!"

PRINCIPLES: Accepting rules as truth; merging with the system; a sense of belonging and security in exchange for individuality; genuine joy in following rules and being part of the system; deeply ingrained beliefs and patterns, often inherited or instilled in early childhood.

1. DOGMA

THE SHADOW: Merging with the system feels not like prison, but like paradise. "Your people," "order," "meaning." So any step toward freedom will feel like betrayal. You'll be afraid, ashamed, and lonely. You'll defend your familiar rules (even if they're suffocating you) to the very end, calling it "love," "duty," or "destiny."

THE ACTION: Find your own "forget-me-not" in your life. That living thing you're currently giving away to others without even noticing. Remember: which desire of yours have you postponed "for later"? Which of your talents is working not for you, but for someone else? Where do you tell yourself "this is how it should be," even though something inside quietly whispers: "I don't want to"?

Ask yourself honestly: "Who or what am I giving my one and only life to right now? And do I want to keep doing this?"

KEY IMAGES:

The girl with the blindfold: Any of us at some point. You don't see that you're inside the system, viewing the world through its rules. The blindfold with inscriptions symbolizes the beliefs instilled in you, shaping your perception and guiding your behavior.

The forget-me-nots in her hands: Your true, living soul — your dreams, talents, feelings. What you genuinely love. Notice they're already cut, severed from their roots, and you're offering them to the Idol, unaware of the value you're giving away.

The Idol covered in inscriptions: "The System." A set of rules, an authority not to be contradicted. The illegible signs on it represent unspoken rules that aren't open to question, explanation, or understanding. They are simply to be followed.

The crowd with flowers: You're not alone — around you is a whole community supporting this ritual exchange, because "it's always been this way" and "that's how everyone lives."

2. Misfit

"I found a suitable mechanism. It seems perfect to me. Every cog knows its neighbor. Here, order, meaning, and belonging are promised to everyone. I cling to it with my entire being, trying with all my might to become a gear—respected and indispensable. But with every turn, I hear a crunch: it seems wings are breaking. But I'll endure it: admitting to myself that I'm not part of this clock at all is scarier than the pain of losing my wings."

2. MISFIT

IMAGE: A dragonfly has gotten caught in the mechanism of a clock and is trying with all its might to function as the hour hand, in an extremely uncomfortable position—upside down. It doesn't notice that in its attempt to exist in an alien environment, it has already lost two wings.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you try, at any cost, to fit in where you don't belong. Remember "Dogma"? There was the illusion of a big, right world. Here, the world has shrunk to a cold, faceless mechanism with only one task: to be a suitable part. Though the dragonfly was made for flight and lightness, it manages to convince itself it's in the right place, solving some important task. It wants so badly to be needed that it decides: "I'll become a gear. I'll fit in. I'll manage." Refusing to understand that fitting in is impossible, the dragonfly begins to gradually destroy itself. And it can't stop. Because stopping would mean admitting: I'm a stranger here. I was wrong. I struggled in vain. And that's more painful for it than losing its wings.

PRINCIPLES: The contradiction between one's own nature and an alien role; attempting to fit in at the cost of self-destruction; substituting life for function; inability to stop, even when the price becomes obvious; the illusion that suffering makes us valuable.

THE SHADOW: You can remain in the position of the "dragonfly in the clock" indefinitely and even find a kind of high in it. Romanticize your suffering. Say: "I work so hard," "I've invested so much in this relationship," "I've endured so much." You start confusing pain with value, and exhaustion with devotion. "I broke my wings, but at least the mechanism needs me"—that's the trap. The mechanism doesn't need you. The mechanism needs a function. And it will get that function from anyone.

THE ACTION: Honestly look at your life and name the place where you're currently hanging "upside down." Where are you trying to be something you're not? What role, job, or relationship requires you to break yourself? Are the wings already broken? Or are they just aching from the strain? Ask yourself, silencing fear for a moment: "If I remove the fear of being discarded, rejected, unwanted—would I stay here even a minute longer?"

KEY IMAGES:

The dark clock mechanism: The world has narrowed to the size of a task. Only the function remains, which must be performed at all costs. A person no longer sees the horizon—they only see the next cog they need to fit into.

The forget-me-not-colored dragonfly: A direct link to the "Dogma" card. That same living soul that once carried flowers to the Idol is now trying to become a part of the mechanism.

The upside-down position: An inversion of everything natural. The dragonfly, made for flight and sun, hangs upside down in darkness. This is about any situation where you're not doing what you were made for: working a job you hate, living a life that isn't yours, playing a role that turns you inside out.

The lost wings: Wings are potential, dreams, lightness, talents, freedom. They don't tear off all at once—one by one, imperceptibly. First one wing (a small concession), then another (one more). And then it turns out there's nothing left to fly with.

3. Schism

"A whole life has passed. And it seems to me it was completely in vain... Everything here is the same: the same wall, the same Idol. But now I see what I didn't notice before: barbed wire and crows—harbingers of death. Something inside me has died. It didn't die suddenly. But slowly, gradually. First imperceptibly, then painfully. I know that we are all slowly dying here. But not everyone is given the chance to understand this. I feel them looking at me, waiting for me to take my place among them again. They think I'll calm down, and everything will go back to how it was. But it will never be the same again. Never. That girl with naive eyes and a bouquet of fresh flowers is dead and buried under thick layers of ice and snow. Today I say goodbye to her. Forgive me, my girl! I'm so sorry... The beautiful fairy tale didn't happen. Because it was all a Deception."

IMAGE: A cloudy winter day. A rough wall with barbed wire, on which a crow sits. Above the unchanging Idol, covered in ancient inscriptions, other crows circle. The crowd has formed a line and silently watches the heroine, in whose hands is an almost withered bouquet of forget-me-nots. On her head is the same blindfold with illegible symbols. But on her throat, a dark mark has appeared, as if burned with a branding iron.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of the moment when the illusion crumbled. And you suddenly saw the depth of the pit you were in: a whole life had been stolen from you—time you could have dedicated to yourself. But you spent it maintaining the illusion of rightness and conformity. And perhaps, on realizing someone else's dream. While forgetting your own. The question shifts from "How can I become part of this?" ("Misfit") to "God, how long have I been here, and who am I now?" It's like quiet mourning at the edge of an internal abyss.

PRINCIPLES: Realization of the trap; collapse of illusions; feeling of hopelessness and a stolen life; the chasm between what was promised and reality; the first internal separation from the familiar system while outwardly maintaining the form; the beginning of a deep crisis.

3. SCHISM

25 years after

THE SHADOW: Schism is a freezing point. You can get stuck here forever. Stand on the edge of the abyss, mourn the stolen years, recount grievances, prove to yourself and the world how you were deceived. Grief becomes an identity, and resentment becomes the only warmth. "I understood everything, I see everything, but I change nothing"—that's the trap of this card. Knowledge without movement becomes a new way of not living.

THE ACTION: Allow yourself to hate. Allow yourself to mourn. Allow yourself to be angry and grieve for the self you lost. Don't jump into "forgiveness" ahead of time—artificial, intellectual, forced. You have the right to go through this dark water. For now, don't ask "what should I do?" Ask quietly and honestly: "What have I truly lost? Not what was promised, not what I was supposed to receive—but what was me?"

KEY IMAGES:

The Idol: Still the same unshakable system of "coordinates," continuing to dominate you, even against your will.

The wall with barbed wire: A crude, dead, artificial system of restrictions. These attributes didn't appear from nowhere – they were always here. You just couldn't see them until now.

The crowd lined up: The inertia of the system, its expectation and silent judgment. Their gazes upon you pressure you to fall back in line. They are living proof that the system works, and rejecting it looks like personal madness.

The almost withered bouquet of forget-me-nots: Remnants of a living identity. What was a bright offering in "Dogma," crippled by the Dragonfly in "Misfit," here approaches death. The few living flowers are the last, fragile proof: "I'm still alive, there's still something inside me."

The mark (brand) on the throat: The most terrifying symbol. The violence of the system has come to be perceived as a natural norm. If in "Dogma" there was only a blindfold that could still be removed, here there is a mark burned from within. It's on the very ability to say "no," to breathe freely, to be oneself. The system didn't just control you—it changed your essence.

The crows: Harbingers of decay. They circle not over a body, but over an idea, over faith. The Idol is dead to you, and nature (the crows) begins to consume this man-made cult.

4. Soul Scream

"I can't control this. The dam inside me has burst, and an avalanche of pain, rage, and indignation erupted from me with such force that I felt like I was shattering into pieces. I want to tear this world apart! Smash it to splinters. But the only thing I can do is scream. To let out everything that has been building up for years: pain, deceit, cold, silence, submission, resignation. Never again! Do you hear me? Never! I'm screaming. My body is screaming. The whole world is screaming. And this scream is my liberation."

4.SOUL SCREAM

IMAGE: A state of nervous breakdown. The mouth is distorted by a deafening scream. Bloody tears stream from the eyes. On the cheek are fresh scrapes and bruises, as if from a blow or desperate head-banging against something hard. The white blindfold with inscriptions has fallen from disheveled hair. The mark that branded the heroine's throat in the previous card has disappeared.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the body taking over from the mind when silence becomes unbearable. The organism did what it should have done long ago: released all the pain you had been pushing inside for years. Remember "Schism"? There you stood on the edge of the abyss, mourning yourself. Quietly. Coldly. With dignity. Here there is no dignity. There is only a scream, bloody tears, and a battered face. In this scream, there is no room for rules. Only pure, animal pain.

PRINCIPLES: An uncontrollable outburst of destructive energy as a result of accumulated destruction; sweeping away internal prohibitions; purification through inevitable destruction; the point of no return.

THE SHADOW: The scream can become a performance. You can learn to scream beautifully to evoke pity. You can wear your pain like a medal, present it to the world as proof of your depth. It's important to distinguish: is this scream a point of no return or a tool of manipulation? The card is honest only when you're not thinking about an audience. When you scream into the void because you have no other choice.

THE ACTION: Don't silence yourself. Don't apologize. If the scream has come—let it be. But after the scream—fall silent. Don't explain to anyone what it was. Don't make excuses. Don't ask for forgiveness for daring to feel. Just let the wound breathe. Ask yourself, when your breathing steadies: "If no one ever knew about this pain, would I still have screamed?"

KEY IMAGES:

The deafening scream: What was suppressed for years finally finds an outlet. This is the uncontrollable destruction of prohibitions and rules, nature's rebellion against the Idol, against everything imposed and alien.

Bloody tears: Pain that has ceased to be just an emotion and has become physical, bodily.

The battered cheek, bruises, scrapes: Attempts at self-harm, when aggression needs to be directed somewhere, and it turns inward upon oneself.

The blindfold has fallen off: For a time, the world is no longer seen through the prism of the system and its rules.

The mark on the throat has disappeared: The most astonishing thing. In "Schism," this was a brand burned onto the very ability to speak. In the scream, it's gone. Because you spoke. You screamed. You let your voice out—even in such a terrible way.

5. Departure

"Congratulate me! I've finally made the decision! I'm leaving! Now only forward, toward the light on the horizon. Let the past stay behind. I believe everything will be fine simply because I have finally moved."

IMAGE: A snowy plain, across which a wide path trodden by someone else long ago stretches into the distance. The heroine walks away quickly along it. And although nothing is visible on the horizon except the endless white plain, this does not frighten her: if there is a path, it must lead somewhere. The heroine leaves, as it seems to her, with light baggage. But she has still "brought" something from her old life: on the left, dragging imperceptibly along the ground, is the enormous shadow of the Idol, cast by the heroine herself. But she has no idea.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is a card of duality. On one hand, it's about the first decisive step that you kept putting off for so long. On the other hand, it's about deceptive lightness, which contains not only the frosty air of freedom but also the shadow of the past that is hard to notice. Yes, you left. You slammed the door and rushed off with light baggage, just to get as far away as possible, as quickly as possible. The horizon is bright. Ahead lies a new life. It seems the hardest part is behind you. After all, the most difficult thing was to make this decision. The rest will somehow fall into place on its own. But look at what you are carrying with you: the Idol follows you like a shadow. And you cast this shadow yourself. Because it has already become a part of you: your thoughts, your habits, your reactions. You changed the scenery. But the play, for now, remains the same.

PRINCIPLES: The first decisive step beyond the system; the illusion of liberation; enthusiasm; the unconscious retention of former psychological patterns.

5. DEPARTURE

THE SHADOW: "Changing the scenery" is the most insidious trap at this stage. You can leave your husband, but marry his copy. Quit your job, but find the same dynamics in a new team. Move to another city, but recreate the same relationships with the same people in new faces. You change the geography while preserving the old essence.

THE ACTION: Don't look for a new road. Look for why you choose this one. Turn around. Not to go back—but to see. The shadow is not an enemy. It is your unprocessed experience. That part of the system that has become you. You cannot leave it at the station like a suitcase. You can only see it and acknowledge: "This is also me. For now." Ask yourself: "Am I leaving FROM something, or moving TOWARD something? And what of what I am leaving do I already carry within myself?"

KEY IMAGES:

The horizon, beyond which nothing is visible: A visualization of the unknown. The heroine walks toward an abstract "something better," not a specific goal.

A path trodden by someone else: The heroine walks not on her own trail, but on one that someone else walked sometime before.

The Idol-shadow to the heroine's left: The dark, clinging mark of the system. The fact that this shadow is not immediately obvious is a direct analogy for how systemic patterns invisibly control us even after we leave.

Spatial dichotomy: To the right and above – the Sun, pointing to the conscious, desired future; to the left and below – the Shadow of the Idol, pointing to the subconscious, where the familiar "idol" still sits.

6. Crackers

"Life among people like me feels like a celebration. It gives me the strength to keep going. Or maybe I don't need to go anywhere anymore, because I've already arrived at my destination? Or is there some kind of catch here, huh?"

6. CRACKERS

IMAGE: A noisy party. Colorful confetti flies through the air, like a mockery of snow. In the center of the hall is a happy heroine in a beautiful evening gown. She is surrounded by admirers presenting her with bouquets of flowers as a sign of admiration. However, the flowers in them are withered for some reason. And in the crowd of admirers, behind the heroine's left shoulder, a painfully familiar face lurks...

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the catch: you feel good and have fun, but something is bothering you if you look closely. Remember "The Departure"? You left, but you took the shadow of the Idol with you. And now you've found others — fellow runaways. You're together, you're free, you're celebrating. For the first time in a long time, you feel alive. Needed. Beautiful. Noticed. The snow no longer oppresses you — confetti has replaced it. Dulled by wine, the past no longer hurts. Under the onslaught of the crowd of admirers, loneliness has receded. It seems that everything has finally worked out for the best. You deserved this celebration, you suffered for it.

But the card whispers: take a closer look. The flowers in the admirers' hands have long been dead. Those surrounding you bring not life, but the memory of it. And a familiar silhouette of the Idol lurks behind your shoulder. These signs only speak of one thing: in essence, nothing has really changed yet.

But you don't notice it. Or you don't want to notice. And that's probably right: a celebration is a celebration. But know this: it will end. The illusion will dissipate. And things will appear as they truly are.

PRINCIPLES: The first attempt to create your own world; intoxicating euphoria; the illusion of a clean slate; the search for recognition and belonging; the unconscious repetition of old patterns in new settings.

THE SHADOW: Party poppers can last for years. You can become a collector of "your own kind" — forever seeking new hangouts, new communities, new eyes in which you'll appear beautiful and free. You can become a professional party guest, an eternal teenager chasing highs, a seeker of thrills and quick validations of your worth. You confuse intensity with depth, and recognition with intimacy. The high is not happiness. The crowd is not home.

THE ACTION: Don't deny yourself the celebration. You have a right to it; after all, you've started moving. But remember: this celebration won't last forever. It's a breather before big and important work. Ask yourself quietly, amidst the party noise: "Who will I be with when morning comes? And who am I without these eyes looking at me?"

KEY IMAGES:

Withered bouquets in the hands of admirers: A reference to the "Splintering" card. There was one withered bouquet there — your dying identity. Here there are many, and they are in the hands of those around you. Your new community feeds not on life, but on a cult of loss. You are together not because you share a common future, but because you share a common past that you haven't fully processed.

The Idol behind the shoulder: The system hasn't been destroyed. It has adapted. The Idol has taken a new form — now it's gazes, judgments, the desire to be liked, the need to be accepted. He stands behind your back, but you don't turn around. Because if you turn around — you'll have to admit that you're dancing to his tune again, and your escape led nowhere.

Evening gown and beautiful hairstyle: A new costume of identity. You've created an image in which you are accepted. It's beautiful, it works, others like it. But it's still a costume. Not skin.

Confetti instead of snow: Snow is reality. Cold, genuine. Confetti is illusion. Bright, fun, temporary. Confetti falls and turns into trash that a janitor will sweep away in the morning. Reality, however, isn't going anywhere.

7. Inventory

"The party is over. The illusion has dissipated. What was offered under the guise of intimacy and recognition turned out to be empty. I have no doubt these bouquets have seen better days. But they came to me as useless junk. I am very angry. And this anger will help me throw the junk in the trash without regret."

IMAGE: A familiar landscape of the Northern Path — a snowy plain, a hazy-sunny sky. In the center of the frame is an almost ritualistic pile of trash. In it: colorless withered flowers, porcelain theater masks, sprinkled with yesterday's confetti.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about a huge internal shift from illusion to a sober perspective. For the first time, you look at your life not as a participant in the drama, but as an inspector: coldly and honestly.

PRINCIPLES: Disillusionment; a sober look at reality; accepting responsibility; rejecting the fake; inventory as an act of growing up.

THE SHADOW: It's easy to slip into cynicism here. "All people are masks, all relationships are transactions, all flowers are withered." You can devalue not only the fake but also the living. You can get so caught up in the inventory that you forget: the pile of trash is not all of life. It's only what has died. It's important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Withered flowers are not all the flowers in the world. Fake masks are not all faces.

7.INVENTORY

THE ACTION: Take a sheet of paper. Divide it into two columns. In the first, write: "What was others' that I wore as my own." This includes everything you took from others' expectations: roles you played; "shoulds" you fulfilled; masks you put on. In the second column, write: "What was mine that I hid." Here — what was always yours, but you were afraid to show it. Desires you suppressed. Talents you didn't develop. Feelings you forbade yourself.

Don't judge, don't criticize, don't try to change anything right away. Just write it down on paper – honestly and without embellishment.

KEY IMAGES: A pile of discarded withered flowers and porcelain masks: Illusion sent to the dump. The flowers are simulacra of connection, relationships, "intimacy" that turned out to be dead. The masks are tools of the social game, roles you played and roles that were played on you. Together, they form the complete kit of a failed escape into the external. It's important to understand: in this pile are not only the attributes of other people. These are also your own masks. Your roles. Your investments in the illusion. An inventory of the external always turns out to be an inventory of the internal.

8. Past As Clay

"In my imagination, I can give new meanings to old things. I can turn painful experiences into art. Of course, the past isn't going anywhere. But I can look at it differently. And then it becomes clay, from which I mold something new."

8.PAST AS CLAY

IMAGE: In the middle of a winter avenue, a rather unusual art object sits: it is carved from the same material as the Idol. In place of a face is a bright porcelain mask. Withered flowers have been transformed into an extravagant headdress. And the entire surrounding space, including tree trunks and the torso of the art object, is covered with intricate golden patterns, reminiscent of mysterious inscriptions. At the feet of the art object lies a small bouquet of living forget-me-nots, like an offering left by some admirer of this strange art.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how to stop being a victim of your past and become its author, transforming painful experiences into material for creativity and the foundation for a new identity. We learn not to erase, not to forget, not to pretend nothing happened. But to take that material in our hands —and reinterpret it, give it a personal interpretation that can help us heal.

PRINCIPLES: Reinterpreting the past; sublimating pain into creativity; finding an authorial position; translating the system's rules into your own language; accepting your experience as material for building yourself.

THE SHADOW: You can get so caught up in processing the past into beautiful images that you remain in this gallery forever. Endlessly examining your wounds, turning them into art, talking about them—but never taking the next step. Turning therapy and creativity into a way to avoid moving forward.

THE ACTION: Find a rule or script in your story that once governed your life. Maybe you were taught that "money is evil," "you can't trust anyone," or "you must be convenient." Now rewrite it. Give this experience a new meaning. Don't negate it, but ask yourself: "If this experience is not a mistake or a sentence, but simply material—what can I mold from it?"

KEY IMAGES:

The art object: This is you. You understand and acknowledge that you carry the Idol within you, but that doesn't stop you from claiming the right to "wear it in your own way."

The avenue of trees: Those very "people from the crowd" from the cards "Dogma" and "Schism," as well as the "admirers" from the "Party Poppers" card. Now you see them differently: they are like trees, firmly rooted in familiar soil. They are marked by the system and unable to break free from it on their own. Just like you once were...

The headdress made of withered flowers: Sublimation of emotional pain, which has become part of your image, your story, and your style.

The golden patterns: The ancient inscriptions of the system are not deciphered, but reinterpreted and given your own meaning. You've translated them into your own language.

The bouquet of living forget-me-nots at the base: A reminder that inside you, that same "I" which no system could kill, is still alive.

The scene's composition, similar to the "Party Poppers" card: The same avenue, the same figure in the center. But where before you were part of the performance, now you yourself are the artist. And even if nothing has changed externally—everything has changed within.

9. So fragile

"There was a terrible storm last night, like a cruel mockery from a world whose sole purpose seemed to be showing me my insignificance. And the worst part is, you can't argue with it: you cannot resist the elements... But how do I piece myself together from the fragments now? And is it even worth trying, if in the end I'm bound to lose in this battle with the world?"

9.SO FRAGILE

IMAGE: A tarnished, flaking coral mask lies in the loose snow. Next to it lie withered flowers – the remnants of the heroine's creative reinterpretation from the "Past as Clay" card. Everything she worked so hard on has been turned into wreckage. Towering over this destruction is the dazzlingly cold winter sun.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: The card where the world shows its power, and you are left lying in the snow amidst the debris. It swept away everything you were building. The irony is that the world didn't intend to punish you. It simply showed its strength.

PRINCIPLES: The first confrontation with reality; the collapse of new identities under the pressure of circumstances; realization of one's own fragility; the pain of losing something you poured your soul into.

THE SHADOW: The most dangerous thing about this card is the shame of being so fragile. Shame for not protecting what you made. For believing you were already strong, when in reality you were glass. From this shame, a decision is born: "It's better to never create anything again. Better to be a cynic than a broken creator. Better not to love than to lose. Better not to build than to see ruins." This decision kills more than any storm.

THE ACTION: Now it's important to separate value from durability. Yes, your creation broke. Yes, it turned out to be fragile. But does that mean it wasn't valuable? What you created mattered — to you. And no storm can negate that fact. Fragility is not a flaw. It's a property of everything living, everything real, everything that has a soul. A stone isn't afraid of a storm, but a stone will never bloom either. Ask yourself, looking at the wreckage: "Do I want to be an eternal statue that nothing can touch — or a flower, fragile perhaps, but alive?"

KEY IMAGES:

The tarnished mask and withered flowers on the snow: The result of a fragile new identity colliding with the laws of the real world.

The dazzlingly cold sun: The strength and power of the elements, which a person cannot resist.

10. For This?!

"So what have I built here?! If this is all I'm capable of, then what was it all for?! Fragile, worthless, naive! Foolishness! A whim!"

IMAGE: In an empty factory hangar, a dramatic scene unfolds: the heroine, with a furious kick, destroys a colorful children's stacking toy. This act has one silent witness: a stone Idol, lurking in the silence of the hangar. It watches the heroine intently and seems to approve of this act of voluntary destruction.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of the moment when you destroy what you've created because it seems to you not viable enough in the harsh realities of life, too naive to have the right to exist. Remember "Past as Clay"? There you learned to transform pain into art, to build a new self. You created something of your own—fragile, perhaps clumsy, but yours. However, it didn't pass the test of reality. And the complex of destructive feelings you experienced in the "So Fragile" card makes you devalue the first sparks of freedom and creativity. You no longer see this as personal development. Now, for you, it's a "mistake," an "absurdity," "child's play."

But you're not destroying because it's truly bad. You're destroying because the shame of your own "immaturity," of your "insufficient seriousness," becomes unbearable. You measure yourself by the old standards of the system—scale, functionality, "adulthood." And your living, colorful, but fragile construction loses in this judgment.

PRINCIPLES: Self-destruction through devaluation; auto-aggression; destroying your own results out of shame for their "imperfection"; rejection of the natural process of growth; the voice of the inner critic, stemming from old internalized beliefs.

10.FOR THIS?!

THE SHADOW: Auto-aggression can become a habit. You can destroy relationships at the moment of happiness, abandon projects at the finish line, devalue victories immediately after achieving them. "Easier to break it myself than to wait for others to break it"—that's the trap of this card. By destroying what's yours, you maintain the illusion of control: it's me, not them. But the price is everything you could have built.

THE ACTION: Catch the moment when you feel like kicking. When a voice inside starts: "This is nonsense, nobody needs this, this is too childish." Freeze. Don't strike. Just for a second. Ask yourself: "Whose voice is this? By whose standards am I measuring my 'not enough'?" The tower had the right to stand. Even if it's childish. Even if it's colorful. Even if it's the only one in this cold hangar.

KEY IMAGES:

The children's stacking toy: That new thing you built. It's bright and cheerful, unpretentious. But you see only its "childishness"—frivolity, infantilism, inappropriateness in the "big world." Shame makes you destroy it.

The kick: Auto-aggression. You yourself strike at what you've created.

The figure of the Idol in the shadows: The inner critic as an echo of the system you know so well. And it dictates the verdict: "Unworthy."

The factory hangar: The new-old reality in which you're trying to exist. Having escaped your Idol, out of all possible options, you've again found a world where meaning and beauty are not valued, but function, order, and conformity to standards are. That's why your colorful tower here is a foreign body.

10. May-December Romance

"I don't want to be a victim anymore. If there's only one alternative, then I'd rather be the predator. Apparently, in this life, building isn't necessary —it's much more effective to capture and possess."

11. MAY-DECEMBER ROMANCE

IMAGE: An unusual couple sits at a table in a restaurant. She is a grand dame. He is an inexperienced youth. A passionate romance is brewing between them, clearly initiated by the woman. But the romance resembles more of a capture, where one appropriates the other, evidenced by the grand dame's predatory gaze fixed on the youth as if he were prey. On the table are two glasses; an unpleasant-looking beetle crawls on one of them. A vase of ripe peaches only looks appetizing at first glance: the fruit reveals rotting flesh and swarming insects. A dangerous catch can be sensed in everything.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: The card captures the moment when a person, frightened by the complexity of genuine growth, chooses a false path—an imitation of strength by returning to old patterns, but now in the role of the aggressor. This is regression disguised as maturation. You decide, almost demonstratively, to use others to achieve your mercenary goals. It seems to you that the world is dual, and in it you can only play one of two roles: predator or victim. You choose the former. As a tool, you begin using the instruments of the system. This is evidenced by a barely noticeable sign—the Idol print on the left lapel of the jacket, right over the heart. Your prey is naive and suspects nothing. His soul is still open and pure—the bouquet of forget-me-nots on his chest is fresh and beautiful. You didn't choose him by chance: he embodies yourself when you were still naive. And this naivety you now fiercely hate.

PRINCIPLES: Regression to old patterns, but now in the role of aggressor rather than victim; imitation of strength instead of genuine growth; using another as a function or resource; substituting intimacy with control, possession, and power; the beginning of a process of internal decay.

THE SHADOW: You can become a professional of power. A collector of other people's souls. You will confuse control with strength, and another's dependence with love. But inside, the same clock ticks: your deadline, your fear, your loneliness that you feed with others' attention. And the more you "possess," the hungrier you become.

THE ACTION: Look at the one you "possess." See in them your former self—the one that once carried forget-me-nots to the Idol. Ask yourself honestly: "Do I want to be with this person—or do I want to be them? Am I nourished by this relationship—or am I being destroyed by it?"

KEY IMAGES:

The unequal couple: Classic toxic "predator-prey" dynamic, only now you're on the other side.

The glasses and the beetle: The glasses are pushed toward your side—control over resources, attention, possibly finances. The empty glass with the beetle—poison in the resource itself. But neither you nor your "victim" notice it—classic denial of the toxicity of what's happening.

The rotten peaches: The "sweet fruits" of life, passion, relationships—are actually rotten inside and teeming with parasites. An illusion of abundance concealing decay.

The clock on the table: The relationship is doomed; it's a deal with a time limit. The clock reminds you of your deep-seated fear of your own passing time, which you try to compensate for by wielding power over someone who has more time left.

The signs on the lapels: A contrast of essences. His forget-me-nots—a fresh, living, but vulnerable identity he hasn't yet lost. Your Idol print—the system has become part of your armor, an instrument of power. But you don't serve the Idol—you've learned to use it.

The mark on the chest: Evolution of the mark. In "Schism," there was a brand on the throat (suppression of voice). Here, the inscriptions are over the heart—a program wired into the center of feelings. Your way of "loving" is distorted by the pattern of possession and control.

The restaurant: The territory of social games. Sincerity is switched off here by default. Everything is ritual, distance, mask.

The snow outside the window: A reminder of the reality of the Northern Path, from which you've temporarily taken shelter in this warm but illusory game.

12. Fever of Love

"Oh my god! I've found what I was looking for. You are wonderful! How long I've waited for you! No more searching, no more vacillating. I surrender to your strength and charisma. Promise me you'll take all my problems into your hands. All that's left for me is to bloom."

IMAGE:An intoxicated victim is ready to hand over the most precious thing she possesses to a charming con man, in exchange for intimacy and imagined love. She is literally thrusting at him a bouquet of fresh forget-me-nots, along with her own living, pulsating heart, prepared with a garnish. The con man is not at all opposed to receiving such a gift. He has no intention of paying the bills.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is a card about a false path, where you voluntarily place yourself in the hands of an imagined savior, because the longing for peace and relief from responsibility has become too strong. You mistake dependence for salvation, and self-destruction for love.

Remember "May-December Romance"? There, the heroine went hunting. Here is the other pole of the same trap. Now you are being hunted. And you are so tired of being strong that you're ready to let yourself be devoured by anyone, as long as that "someone" relieves you of yourself.

You don't notice the small but important details: the Idol's face peers slyly from his jacket pocket. The window resembles prison bars. And your heart already lies before him on a plate.

This is not love. This is a symbiosis of two pathologies: one who seeks someone to consume, and one who seeks to be consumed.

12.FEVER OF LOVE

PRINCIPLES: Victim of self-deception; abandoning oneself for the sake of security, peace, and imagined happiness; idealizing another as a way to avoid responsibility; exalted self-sacrifice as a form of dependency; unequal exchange; false expectations; voluntary dependence.

THE SHADOW: You could spend your life searching for "saviors," giving away your power to them. Each time, you'll think "this one is real." Each time, you'll wonder why the plate ends up empty, and you—drained of blood. The "savior" doesn't save. He consumes. And you willingly place yourself under the knife, because being devoured is easier than being alone and taking responsibility for your own life.

THE ACTION: Take your heart back. It is not a dish to be served for dinner. To no one. Not even the most wonderful savior with the most perfect words. Ask yourself, alone with the silence: "What will happen if no one comes to save me? Do I have the will to live without a sacrificial platter?"

KEY IMAGES:

The heart on the plate: An act of spiritual suicide. A direct link to the "People Pleaser" card. But here the sacrifice is even more terrifying: the heart is alive, pulsating, freshly removed from the chest. It's sprinkled with forget-me-not petals in an attempt to make self-destruction beautiful, poetic, sacred.

The Idol figurine in the con man's pocket: The "savior" will not only fail to relieve you of your problems—he will become their new source and the embodiment of control.

The window with bars: The new cage is already here. Not the rough wall with barbed wire from "Schism," but an elegant, almost invisible barrier of relationship, dependency, the illusion of salvation.

The forget-me-nots: The last living identity, which you are voluntarily giving up, not for the first time.

13. Transplant

"What if the recipe for what I need has already been found? And here it is, right in front of you. Why reinvent the wheel when it's enough to just do what this Foreign Woman does? Just look how nimbly she handles the snow! I think I've found a suitable form for myself!"

13. TRANSPLANT

IMAGE: A young foreign woman has distributed the snow that fell overnight into pots. In one of them, she has planted a sprig of forget-me-not, hoping it will successfully take root. However, a large, ugly crack has appeared in the pot, and the forget-me-not has become covered with black necrotic spots.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you look for a beautiful, painless cage in which to hide from yourself and from the need to build something of your own from scratch. You try to "transplant" yourself into someone else's idealized form, hoping it will heal your inner pain.

Once you sought salvation in another person. Now you seek salvation in a ready-made system, philosophy, aesthetic, culture. You believe that form will save content. That if you copy the gesture accurately enough, strike the right pose, master the ritual —then the chaos inside will subside on its own.

But your forget-me-not is stuck in a pot of snow. It's still blooming, but black spots already mark the petals. Because this environment is not yours. It doesn't nourish you; it kills you.

PRINCIPLES: Attempting to "transplant" oneself into an alien, idealized form; substituting inner work with external borrowing of aesthetics; escaping from oneself into a ready-made system as an "answer"; the illusion that repeating a form will bring harmony to the content; rejection of a living essence in an unsuitable environment; spiritual tourism instead of genuine growth.

THE SHADOW: Spiritual tourism. Changing religions like changing gloves. Zen for Instagram, shamanism for performance, yoga to escape from yourself. You're not growing —you're trying things on. The fabric is someone else's. The seams are tight. But admitting the suit is too small means standing naked again before the world and yourself.

THE ACTION: Separate the aesthetic from the essence. What in this system truly works for you, nourishes you, helps you become deeper? And what have you just taken a pretty picture of, put on like a mask, repeat like a ritual without understanding? Ask yourself honestly: "Am I becoming deeper—or am I just changing the wrappers, hoping no one will notice the emptiness inside?"

KEY IMAGES:

The Foreign Woman: The embodiment of an "alien system" that seems whole, perfect, and devoid of internal conflicts. To you, she is a model to aspire to.

The Peacock: A symbol of exotic beauty, status, and luck. Formally, it's a symbol of prosperity and good fortune. In reality, it's an imported, decorative element, emphasizing how superficial this perception is.

The Pots of Snow: A demonstration of absolute control over chaos. The snow of the Northern Path—cold, pain, reality—is not a threat here, but decorative material for contemplation. A symbol of the attempt to reduce complex reality to a sterile aesthetic.

The Crack in the Central Pot: A sign that the ideal form is not whole. It cannot withstand the insertion of a foreign element. The crack is a warning.

The Forget-Me-Not with Black Spots: Your living, fragile essence, transplanted into an alien environment. The petals are covered with necrotic spots—a visualization of spiritual frostbite. The attempt at assimilation leads not to growth, but to suffering and dying.

14. Surrender

"You know, I've lost. It's time to give up. I'm returning to the system, to dissolve completely into it and finally stop being myself. Personality only brings pain and shame. It's time to erase it. Now I am one of many. There is no more 'me,' there is only 'us.' And in this 'us'—there's a strange relief."

IMAGE: An endless line of soldiers on a snow-covered square. Above them, like a general, the Idol looms. The soldiers' uniforms are dusted with snow, their poses frozen, their faces hidden behind identical porcelain masks. But if you look closely, one soldier stands out from the crowd with an unusual coral mask.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of final capitulation. The point where you voluntarily or forcibly decide to end the uncertainty of freedom, with all its pros and cons, and agree to a quiet, monotonous existence. But this is not union with the world, nor is it enlightenment. This is death while living. You don't become part of a whole—you erase yourself as a person.

PRINCIPLES: Renunciation of individuality and will; dissolving into a faceless collective as an escape from pain and failure; exchanging existential anxiety for predictable order; turning oneself into a function of the system; a decision made in a state of moral exhaustion.

THE SHADOW: This is not finding your tribe—people like you. This is capitulation. You don't become part of a whole—you are erased. You don't find peace—you die while living. The most terrible trap is when you surrender not to an enemy, but to your own fatigue. When you mistake exhaustion for liberation.

14. SURRENDER

THE ACTION: You have the right to be tired. You have the right not to fight. You have the right to a respite. But ask yourself, looking at this endless line: "Who is making this decision—me, or my exhausted, hunted part? And if I merge with the crowd now, who will be waiting for me if I ever want to come back?" Sometimes, "not falling into line" is already a victory. Even if you're just lying face down in the snow, resting. The main thing is that the mask remains your choice, not a uniform.

KEY IMAGES:

The endless line of identical soldiers: A vivisection of the concept of "us." The system as a mechanism, where a living person is replaced by a dead function, and complexity is replaced by primitive uniformity.

The Idol-General: Evolution of the system. From an object of blind worship ("Dogma"), it has transformed into a source of explicit hierarchical power. Now what's required is not faith, but unquestioning submission.

The coral mask in the ranks: A symbol of the total capitulation of the creative self. The mask, created as an act of self-affirmation, becomes a sign of defeat. The heroine offers even her broken, failed "I" as a tribute, to buy the right to disappear.

The white porcelain masks on the others: Voluntary depersonalization, elevated to a norm. A fragile, artificial, replaceable guise of the system.

15. The Bottom

"Am I in Amusement park ..?"

15.THE BOTTOM

IMAGE: A sharply tilted frame, creating a feeling of imbalance, falling, loss of footing. Only the legs of passersby and a section of road covered in melted snow and puddles are in focus. In the puddles, formless, toxic reflections of neon lights shimmer, hinting that you are in Amusement park. No faces, no rides, no sky—only the plane of the ground and fragmentary shadows of other people's lives above it.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of a state where you have completely lost orientation, a sense of perspective, context, and direction. It's unclear where you are or where to go. The world is a dirty road underfoot, narrowed to one small patch torn from a larger context.

PRINCIPLES: Total loss of bearings and footing; "hovering" between falling and rising; a feeling of meaninglessness; exhaustion of the ability to see a future, path, or goal; intoxication.

THE SHADOW: You can settle at the bottom. Make it your identity. "I am the one who fell." This gives you the right not to get up. Amusement park becomes home, and the mud becomes familiar landscape. The most terrible trap of the bottom is not that it's hard to rise from. It's that over time, you stop noticing you're at the bottom. It simply becomes "your place."

THE ACTION: Don't try to get up. Right now—don't. Don't demand heroism, a sudden surge, or a miracle from yourself. Just lie there. Look. Breathe. The bottom is not a sentence. It's the lowest point on a trajectory, after which any movement—even just turning your head—is already upwards. Ask yourself quietly, without getting up: "What do I see from here that I never saw from above? What can this mud show me that I missed while I was running, falling, searching, building?"

KEY IMAGES:

The sharply tilted frame: Visualization of the loss of an inner vertical core. The world is "askew." There is no stable position from which to evaluate anything. This is perceptual vertigo—you don't know which way is up or down, but for some reason, you're looking down.

The plane of the dirty road filling the frame: The world reduced to its lowest, most material, repulsive denominator. Not a path (which leads somewhere), but just a surface where everything ends.

The smeared, toxic neon reflections in the puddles: A profanation of light and hope. The lights of Amusement park (a symbol of illusory joy) are not just distant—they are smeared across the mud. This is not a promise of happiness, but a symptom of poisoning by illusions.

The cropped, illegible legs: Others' lives as a meaningless, abstract stream. The social world exists, but it doesn't communicate with you. You don't see people, but functions, details, obstacles. Visualization of total loneliness and alienation even in a crowd.

The complete absence of context: No faces, no rides, no horizon. The collapse of narrative. It's impossible to piece the scene together, to understand where you are and what's happening. This is a world shattered into puzzle pieces that don't fit.

16. Sign

"Today is that very day when the world spoke to me, loudly and joyfully. It seemed to say: 'I am not a hostile wilderness! And not a trap. I am a place where movement, life, and connection are possible. Your path has meaning! It matters. And know that somewhere very close, there are other travelers, other 'trains,' other crossroads. You will never remain alone here!'"

IMAGE: A train, sparkling joyfully with bright lights, races across an endless snowy plain. In its billowing smoke, the words are clearly visible: "NOT ALONE." This sign has a witness.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of the moment when something around you invisibly shifts: as if, in the heaviest moment of despair, a friend suddenly calls in the silence. And suddenly, you come to understand that the world around you is not meaningless. It is alive, it watches. And it has consciousness. This world is in contact with you. And this sign comes not when you are desperately seeking confirmation, but when you have almost stopped waiting—and simply keep moving forward.

PRINCIPLES: Breaking the pattern of total isolation; a shift in perception from personal drama to realizing you are part of something larger; discovering signs of life and meaning in the external world; receiving a simple sign that requires no response: "You are not alone."

THE SHADOW: You can cling to this sign. Make it into a new Idol. Wait for the train to come for you, to leave its tracks, to change its route. Or you can get stuck deciphering: what exactly did this sign mean? Where is it calling? What should I do now? But the sign doesn't call—it only confirms: you are not alone. Everything else is your path.

16.SIGN

THE ACTION: Don't run after the train. Don't try to turn this sign into an object of scientific study, loading it with various meanings. Simply accept it: the world is on your side. And then—keep walking. In the same direction you were going. Or in a different one, if you suddenly understood something new.

KEY IMAGES:

The endless snowy plain: A clean, open context. Nothing extra, nothing distracting. Only emptiness—and in this emptiness, a sign suddenly appears. Important: the plain hasn't become warm or cozy. The snow is still just as cold. But now it's not a hostile wilderness, but a space where connection is possible.

The bright, luminous train racing through the void: A living, dynamic proof of life, of the existence of other paths and other travelers.

The inscription "NOT ALONE" in the billowing smoke: A direct message, devoid of subtext. The world doesn't just "flicker" with random images—it speaks. And it speaks exactly what you need to hear. Without codes, without riddles, without conditions.

The dark silhouette of the heroine: The figure of the observer receiving the message. We don't see her face or any identifying details. This makes her any one of us.

17. Measure

"Before, I measured myself by others' standards: do I fit in? am I good enough? Today, I simply want to know myself."

17. MEASURE

IMAGE: A middle-aged, naked woman measures herself with a measuring tape marked with zodiac symbols. In front of her, she holds a narcissus flower. The contours of a mandala have emerged on her body—thin, luminous lines forming an intricate pattern.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the time having come to discover what lies beneath the covers. About allowing yourself to be honest and genuine, even if imperfect. This is where the path to oneself begins.

PRINCIPLES: Moving from evaluation ("like/dislike"; "beautiful/ugly") to exploration; removing social and psychological "costumes"; honest acceptance of oneself in all manifestations; studying one's physical, emotional, and symbolic texture; acknowledging duality (light/shadow) as wholeness, not conflict; connecting the personal with the archetypal.

THE SHADOW: You can get stuck in endless self-measurement. Collect tests, undergo therapies, describe yourself in words, gather diagnoses and insights—but never actually start living. The anatomy lab doesn't replace a walk. Knowing all your parameters is not the same as living. You can measure every millimeter of yourself—and still never step into the world.

THE ACTION: Measure yourself. But not by the old standards —"bad/good," "beautiful/ugly," "enough/not enough." But by others: What is my height? Not physical, but internal—how much have I grown or shrunk compared to yesterday's self? What is my weight? What am I carrying on or with me? Isn't it time to leave something behind? Am I warm or cold with myself? Am I feverish with life or in hibernation? What is my speed? (Am I running the wrong way, or standing where I should?) Ask yourself honestly: "What facts about myself am I avoiding acknowledging? What am I trying to cover up?"

KEY IMAGES:

The naked, middle-aged body: Absolute honesty and vulnerability. Not only clothes are removed, but all social masks, all psychological defenses. A return to the zero point of identity—to what truly exists, without embellishment or illusion.

Gray hair, wrinkles: Traces of life's journey. Time and hardships are not hidden, not covered up, not denied. They have become part of the personality, its texture, its history. These are not flaws, but facts.

The mandala on the skin: The emerging inner structure. A map of energy centers, psychological boundaries, patterns of the soul. What was always inside but remained invisible beneath layers of the foreign now shows through.

The measuring tape with zodiac signs: A tool for measuring the parameters of personality. But this measurement is not mechanical—it connects the person with the archetypal, the cosmic. Your personal measure turns out to be part of a larger universe.

The narcissus: A classic symbol of self-knowledge. But here it is not a frozen youth admiring his reflection, but a living flower, growing from instinct (belly, roots) toward expressed word (throat, flower). Truth rises from the depths and blossoms.

The separate light on face and body: Acceptance of duality. Light and shadow, strengths and weaknesses, the obvious and the hidden—all this is not conflict, but wholeness. You don't have to be unambiguous.

18. Soul Gardening

"This little green sprout—it's me. Yes, it's still small. Yes, it's fragile. And I don't even know exactly what kind of tree will grow from it. But I'm giving it soil to grow in, protection from the cold, and plenty of light."

IMAGE: Under a glass dome, a green sprout basks in the sun. Its leaves and the space around it are covered with the golden pattern of a sacred mandala. Whoever planted this sprout has ensured its protection and adaptation to the harsh climatic conditions. When the time comes, the glass dome will certainly be removed. Though the sprout is small, it carries within itself enormous potential for growth and development—because now it has roots, soil, and care. For the first time, it belongs to itself.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the transition from self-knowledge to practical action: the systematic, conscious, and unhurried realization of the potential that lies within you. It's not necessarily something big, loud, or heroic. It's what you've always wanted but never allowed yourself. Your desires, your dreams. Perhaps a calling. Everything that was once suppressed is now pushing its way out. And you not only don't hinder it, but actively facilitate this process.

PRINCIPLES: Transition from self-knowledge to practical realization of potential; nurturing an authentic, fragile essence in the conditions of the real world; providing protection for new beginnings from a dangerous external environment; an incubation period; using the internal structure (mandala) as a map for growth; understanding and accepting the harshness of the environment as context, not an obstacle; regular, non-heroic discipline instead of dramatic spurts.

18.SOUL GARDENING

THE SHADOW: Gardening can become a new form of control. "I will grow myself perfectly." "I will create ideal conditions." "I will monitor every millimeter of growth." A sprout cannot tolerate being tugged by the stem. Don't water it every hour. Don't pull it out to check the roots. Don't compare it to neighboring sprouts. Give it time. Your task is to create conditions, not to pull.

THE ACTION: Find in your life what you are currently "growing." A relationship? A new project? An attitude toward yourself? A new habit? Does it require daily, tedious, invisible care? The kind no one will notice, but without which the sprout would wither? Ask yourself: "What kind of protection can I give my sprout without smothering it? Where is the line between care and control? And am I ready to water it every day, even when no one sees or praises me?"

KEY IMAGES:

The young green sprout: A pure, fragile beginning, free from the past. Not a remade old "self," but an authentic one appearing for the first time. That which was always there but couldn't break through. Its potential is endless, but right now it requires only one thing: to be allowed to grow.

The transparent glass dome: Creating a temporary buffer, allowing the sprout to strengthen itself in the face of reality. The transparency of the dome is a symbol of awareness: the world is visible, connection with it is not severed, but direct impact is still moderated.

The golden mandala on the sprout: A guiding template for growth. A direct link to the "Measure" card. The internal, accepted structure of the soul becomes an external map for development. This is not growing "just anything," but that very "self" whose form was recognized and approved in the silence of self-knowledge.

19. Resonance

"Being in resonance with the world is like playing in a great orchestra. The music is shared, but each person has their own part. The violin doesn't pretend to be a double bass. The piano can't replace the flute. The conductor can't play instead of the musicians. And a dragonfly will never be a hand in a dark, cold clock. It must and will fly."

19. RESONANCE

IMAGE: Spring has arrived in a Japanese garden. A bonsai with a lush crown of lilac-blue flowers sits proudly in a mossy clay bowl. This is how the once fragile sprout, once covered by a glass dome, has grown and matured. Light blue dragonflies circle above its crown. In its shade, moss lives its own life. Water murmurs, water lilies bloom, stones rest, other trees grow. Everything around is harmonious and whole. And instead of snow, cherry blossom petals fall to the ground.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about finding one's true place in the world—not through merging or submission, but through harmony.

Remember "Misfit"? There was a dragonfly with broken wings, stuck in a clock mechanism, trying to become a necessary part. It thought that was the only way to exist. But it turned out to be completely different: it needed to continue being a dragonfly. Because only by staying yourself do you begin to understand where your place is.

You grew your bonsai from a tiny sprout. And the world seems to play along: it sent that very dragonfly to you. It feels good with you. It is in its rightful place here. The world filled a small lake with water, grew moss. But your bonsai didn't merge with them, didn't dissolve into them, didn't submit to them. It began to sound. Like a violin in an orchestra. And as if in response, the entire orchestra came alive and began to play.

PRINCIPLES: Harmonious interaction of unique, integral essences; personal, unique contribution to a shared ecosystem; healing of past traumas through finding one's environment and one's unique place within it; connection based on harmony, not on merging or submission; a harmonious ecosystem.

THE SHADOW: You might mistake "Resonance" for a finale. Decide that now it's "always spring," that pain is gone forever, that harmony is achieved and you can relax. But winter will return. The cycles continue. The difference now is that you have roots. You don't start from zero—you simply enter a new season with the experience of all the previous ones.

THE ACTION: Today, hear someone else's melody. Don't judge it (better/worse), don't compare it to yours, don't try to tune it to your key or drown it out. Simply notice: it exists. It is different. And in that—is beauty. Ask yourself: "With whom do I sound louder and more honestly than I do alone? Who makes my music richer, without trying to rewrite it?"

KEY IMAGES:

The Bonsai: The evolution of the soul: the fragile symbol of the soul from "Dogma," through the suffering of "Misfit" and the nurturing of "Soul Gardening," has gained power, complex form, and continuous blooming.

The dragonfly with four intact wings above the water lilies: A symbol of complete healing. The direct resurrection of the traumatized creature from "Misfit." It no longer fights an alien environment—it dances in its own element. Past wounds are not just healed—they are transformed into a source of lightness.

The delicate mandala on the bonsai bowl: Integration of the inner structure into the foundation of being. The evolution of the symbol from measurement ("Measure") through direction of growth ("Soul Gardening") to a natural, decorative ornament of the life form itself.

The water lilies in the small bowl: New sprouts in a harmonious system. A symbol of fertility generated by established harmony. Other, but compatible lives (projects, relationships, ideas) that arise in the context and with the support of the main "Self," not competing, but enriching the overall picture.

Butterflies, stones, other trees: Visualization of resonance. Not uniformity, but a thoughtful co-existence of different elements, where each enhances the beauty of the other, creating a "third beauty"—the beauty of the entire garden.

The season of spring: A phase of sustained flourishing. Energy is no longer spent on survival or initial growth, but is directed toward maintaining a complex, blooming ecosystem of the soul, its dialogue with the world.

Air filled with light and petals: An atmosphere of lightness, joy, and the natural flow of life. The feeling that everything is happening exactly as it should, without violence or effort.

20. Integration

"My long Northern Path has led me here."

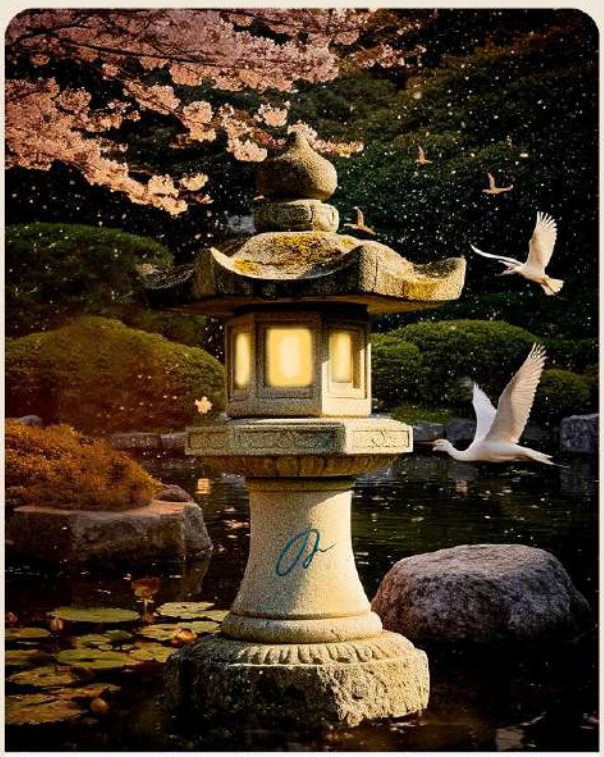
IMAGE: A summer night in a Japanese garden. At the center stands a stone lantern, emitting a soft, steady light. On its stone base — a signature, spelled out in blue forget-me-nots. Beneath your feet, instead of snow — cherry blossom petals. There are no people in the frame. Only the garden, the light, and the silence.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the card of coming home — not in a geographical sense, but in an existential one. You stop searching for yourself in other people, systems, ideas, achievements. You discover that home is not a destination, but a state that was always accessible; you just didn't know how to inhabit it.

Everything you had to go through was not a mistake, but the building material from which you grew your garden. You are not in the frame. But not because you have disappeared. But because you are this garden, this night, this lantern, the light within it, and the herons flying over the pond. Your personal drama has dissolved into a state of being.

This is not the end of the path in the sense of "a point after which nothing happens." It is the finding of a foundation that will remain with you, no matter what happens.

PRINCIPLES: Wholeness; an inner foundation independent of the external; transforming limitations into a source of strength; accepting oneself as a complex but harmonious whole; dissolution of personal drama into a state of peace; home as a state, not a place.



20. INTEGRATION

THE SHADOW: Integration is not a destination. You can't 'achieve enlightenment' and die happy. It's a state that requires maintenance. You might find yourself back in 'Dogma' tomorrow. The difference is that now you know: it's just a station. And the light — is always with you.

THE ACTION: Stay in this state for a while. Savor it. Realize that you no longer have to beg for Light from others, promising obedience, good behavior, and ultimately yourself in return. This Light you create for yourself — in every moment of your life. Because you yourself are the source.

KEY IMAGES:

The Tōrō lantern, signed with a blue signature: The Idol from the first card has undergone a long journey of alchemical rebirth alongside you. Now, not a trace of it remains. You have built your own source of warmth and light — this lantern shining in the night. And this light is not foreign to you — on the lantern stands your personal signature, in the colors of the dragonfly and forget-me-nots.

The herons in the night: A symbol of wisdom, patience, purity.

PANOPTICON
Museum of Absurdities

Panopticon is a Museum of Absurdities that fill our heads. They make us make decisions that ultimately prove harmful to our lives; make us treat ourselves far worse than we deserve; make us act foolishly, and so on. Yet we never admit this to ourselves for one simple reason: we do not see it. All the scenarios of the Panopticon have merged so completely with our personality—and some are so deeply embedded—that it never occurs to us that something might be guiding us. And that "something" is by no means on our side.

Panopticon consists of 5 sections:

- Unconscious fears and beliefs imposed on us by others (Black Sheep)
- Three behavioral scenarios (Valuable Person; Comfort Zone; Exceptionality)
- Emotions stuck in the body (Soma)

BLACK SHEEP

What is this? This is a collection of "distorting mirrors" that live within a person. Their essence lies in the fact that they are imported, irrational, subjective, and harmful. They distort the view of the world, one's life, and above all—of oneself: "I am flawed," "my time has expired," "I am not meant to," "I am helpless," "there is no future." A person carries them for years, but most often does not notice them. They perceive them as "their own." Like kidneys that work, but you don't feel them. They simply believe that this is about them. And this belief forms a prison without walls.

There are 8 cards in total here. The first 6 are introjects (the very distorting mirrors). And 7 and 8 are possible ways out and integration of the experience. There is no linear plot here. Each of the introjects described by the cards exists separately and may not be connected to other cards.

Visual Language and Recurring Imagery. The action unfolds in a single space—the rooms of an abandoned Victorian-era house. The rooms are a metaphor for the inner world of a person in which introjects have settled.

On almost all the cards, there is a recurring symbol—a portrait. It is a metaphor for an introject, a parental figure, a social or cultural norm that has become part of the personality but was never voluntarily chosen. The portraits judge, demand, remind, provoking self-devaluation, fears, dramas, neuroses, etc.

Why the Victorian era? It is an era of facades and double standards: outwardly, everything seems prim and respectable. But inside—dark secrets, forbidden desires, mad relatives in the attic, sins hidden behind heavy drapes. In Victorian interiors, darkness is not just an absence of light, but an active environment. Corners drown in darkness, the light from gas jets only picks out fragments. And from the walls, stern portraits with judging gazes look down at you.

1. Flawed

"I am pathetic and ugly. There's no place for me among normal people. My whole world revolves around how to fix this. But it will never be fixed. Not in this life."

IMAGE: On the floor, next to a portrait of a respectable gentleman, sits a strange creature in a hospital gown: the head of a fish, the body of a human, legs crossed the wrong way. Its gaze is fixed on emptiness, its body limp after endless attempts to alter nature's cunning design. Nothing helped: neither the set of surgical instruments, nor the "instruction manual" in the form of the Ideal's portrait—the respectable gentleman. It only managed to cut its own legs and make a mess in the room when, in a fit of rage, it tore up its medical record book with diagnoses and prescriptions, as well as the self-development diary it had been trying to keep.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you try to live up to an ideal that hangs in your mind. Because of this, you see yourself as a freak, a collection of flaws that urgently need fixing. But you don't need to be anyone's copy. You are the original version of yourself. And what you perceive as flaws are actually your unique quirks, if you stop comparing yourself to others.

PRINCIPLES: Narcissistic injury; feeling like a defective copy of an unattainable ideal; conviction of one's own unfitness for a normal life; comparison with an ideal as a form of self-torture; attempts to "fix" oneself through violence (physical or moral); devaluing one's own thoughts, feelings, one's very nature; a toxic environment inside one's own head.

THE SHADOW: One might start taking pride in the 'ugliness': turn it into a calling card, consciously cultivate it within oneself, aggravate and emphasize it in order to shock and repel other people. Another option is also possible: constant "self-improvement" can become your sole purpose in life. You might spend it searching for the perfect scalpel, the perfect surgeon, the perfect method that will finally transform you into the portrait on the wall. And never notice that while you were admiring the perfect portrait, you yourself passed by. You will never know who you really are, because you spent all your time trying to become someone else.

THE ACTION: Try, for at least a week, not to compare yourself to others. Imagine that the whole world is populated by beings assembled randomly from different parts. And no one—absolutely no one—knows what is "correct." There is no blueprint. There is only an experiment called "life." Each day, find harmony within the chaos of parts that make up you. One or two discoveries. Write them in a diary.

Don't expect to believe what you've written right away. Your task is not to believe, but to notice. Regularly. Month after month.

After 30 days, you'll see: the portrait on the wall is still there, but you've stopped looking back at it. You have more important things to do now: you're learning to see yourself differently.

KEY IMAGES:

The strange creature: Visualization of the deep-seated thought: "I am flawed. A mistake of nature. Everything about me is wrong. And this must be fixed."

The hospital gown: The feeling of being a patient with diagnoses, someone who doesn't live but is constantly undergoing treatment.

The portrait in a gilded frame: The image of the ideal you are supposed to match. Most often, this is the internalized image of a narcissistic parent who set excessively high standards, compared you unfavorably to others, or devalued you. It could also be a successful peer, a former partner, or an imagined 'normal version of yourself.' The portrait doesn't just hang there—it watches, judges, passes sentence.

The scalpels and cuts: Self-flagellation. Attempts to "fix" oneself through various means. For example, through self-criticism, self-harm, endless diets, plastic surgery, renouncing oneself in favor of the "norm."

The scraps of paper on the floor: Traces of a recent outburst of rage. Here, everything that was supposed to help you "become normal" is mixed together: a medical record book with diagnoses (documentary proof of the "flaw"), prescriptions (hope for a cure from oneself), and a self-development diary (attempts to heal through words, exercises, discipline). At some point, you realize they didn't work. Now they are just trash to you, confirming: nothing helps. But consider this: maybe you're simply not sick?

The gloomy, shabby room where the only well-kept detail is the portrait of the ideal: The toxic environment inside your head. The place you inhabit when you view the world through the lens of your own "flawedness."

The duality of the scalpels under the portrait, which at a glance could be mistaken for artist's brushes: A distorted understanding of the essence of self-work. For you, this path lies not through creative transformation and new meanings, but through violence against your own nature, restructuring, cutting away, and resewing.

2. Expiration Date

"I believe in a philosophy where people have an expiration date. A label is stamped on everyone. According to mine, I'm no longer fresh goods. My time on the shelf of life has expired. Soon I'll be disposed of and replaced with a new product. So do I even have the right to desire anything from life, if my time is up?"

IMAGE: In a silver bowl darkened by age lie spoiled fruits—persimmons and pomegranates—that wasps have claimed as their own. From the wall, a portrait of a young maiden gazes down in silent reproach. Beneath it, small clocks tick, reminding of inexorable time, which will carry everything away with it, leaving perhaps only memories.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you measure yourself by the yardstick of disposable goods. You have chosen a coordinate system where a person is a function, a resource, "material." And in that system, you truly have no value. You overlook that the world is more complex than a shelf of yogurts. Yes, there are products valued for freshness. But there are also those whose value grows with time. It is age, experience, lived life that makes things unique. Aged wine, antique furniture, old paintings, vintage jewelry—their value lies not in "freshness," but in history, in the traces of time, in the uniqueness that cannot be reproduced from scratch.

You confuse "freshness" with "life." It seems to you that if you are not young and fresh physically, then you are not alive at all. But life is not the condition of your skin. It is the ability to feel, to want, to create, to love, to be surprised. And these abilities have no expiration date.

You don't see that you yourself would become a unique specimen if you stopped measuring yourself. Your experience, scars, wrinkles, losses, and victories—these are what make you one of a kind. No "fresh" version has that depth.

PRINCIPLES: A consumerist attitude towards oneself, and possibly towards others; the ability to evaluate only by criteria of commodity appearance, missing everything else; a superficial perception of value; ageism; lookism; prejudice based on external signs; transferring market laws to human life.

THE SHADOW: You could become a collector of your own irrelevance. "At 20, I had a chance," "Before giving birth, I was beautiful," "Before I burned out, I was capable." You hold the rotten fruit in your hands and prove to the world: see? I honestly admit that I'm no longer fit. This is the only pride you have left. "Expired" becomes an identity. You don't just believe your time is up—you build your exclusivity on it. Others still delude themselves, but you know the truth. You are spoiled, but honest.

THE ACTION: Realize one simple fact: you have reduced yourself to the level of a product on a shelf and are now horrified that the expiration date has passed. But you can step out of this coordinate system right now. Look around: there are things that become more valuable precisely with time. Aged wine, an old painting, an antique chair—they are not thrown away; they are cherished. Because time didn't destroy them—it gifted them depth, patina, history, uniqueness.

You measure yourself by the yardstick of disposable goods, but you are not yogurt. You can be something that doesn't spoil, but matures. But for that, you need to stop standing on the shelf and start living. Ask yourself: "Who convinced me that people are products in a shop window? Who benefits from me believing that my time is up? And what will remain of me if I stop measuring myself by an expiration date?"

KEY IMAGES:

The dried and rotting persimmons and pomegranates: Traditional symbols of well-being, happiness, longevity, wisdom, abundance, and even immortality. Here they are shown in a state of decay, symbolizing the collapse of the very concepts of "happiness," "abundance," and "future" in your self-perception.

The black-and-white portrait of a young girl in a copper frame: An idealized, lost version of the perfect specimen you once were, when you had the right to life, happiness, and a future. Or the image of the one who will come to replace you: someone else's youth and freshness, which, however, will one day also fade, but for now serves as a reminder of your "unfitness."

The small clock under the portrait: The objective and inexorable passage of time. They don't shout, don't pressure—they simply tick. But each step confirms: you are moving not towards the future, but towards being written off. A recurring link with card No. 11 of the Northern Path, "May-December Romance."

The wasps: A symbol of the disposal of what is no longer needed.

3. Achievements

"I feel like an Outstanding Fool, with a retinue of parrots. The main trophy of my life is a pink balloon. Ha-ha... And so many hopes were placed on me..."

IMAGE: In a cluttered living room, an important event has just taken place: the ceremonial unveiling of a portrait of a young dandy for the family hall of fame. To his shame, the only achievement of this illustrious offspring is a ridiculously dangling child's balloon. Four parrots, with the air of masters of ceremony, have solemnly hoisted the portrait into the most prominent place, ensuring that the one depicted in it does not remain un-disgraced.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you sincerely believe in a story once instilled in you: "All you're capable of is being a nice empty shell in a play with no substance. And during intermission, handing out ridiculous balloons. Because that's your whole essence." You believed it and now diligently perform this spectacle for the audience, again and again.

PRINCIPLES: A frivolous attitude towards oneself; devaluing or significantly "cheapening" one's own results; reducing all expended effort to a negligible outcome at the very last moment; learned infantilism; conviction of one's inability to achieve more; a love for theatricality and excessive dramatization.

THE SHADOW: Self-devaluation can become a ritual. You can achieve the incredible, but at the moment of success — mentally circle the result in red and write: "So what?" You don't allow yourself to savor it. You're afraid that if you acknowledge the value of what you've done, you'll have to stop and feel joy. And that's dangerous. What if, after joy, there's emptiness? Better to go straight to the emptiness. Without a pause. You become a collector of your own "not enough." Every achievement passes through your internal checkpoint: "too little," "not that," "could have done better," "anyone could do that."

THE ACTION: Don't try to believe in the greatness of the balloon right now. Just look at it. It's pink. It's light. It, damn it, floats. Maybe your mistake isn't that you came with a balloon. But that you put on a tailcoat for it? What if the balloon isn't a failure, but the only living thing in the entire portrait? What if, in it, is you — not the expectations, not the costume, not the pose?

Ask yourself: "What in my life exists without a costume and frame? What do I do not for a report, not for a portrait, not for empty chairs? And what value does it have — simply because it's mine?"

KEY IMAGES:

The portrait of the dandy with a balloon: Visualization of a contradictory self-perception; an imagined gap between investment and result. The costume, pose, frame — symbols of expended resources, initial advantages, claims to significance, which, it seems to you, have turned into a facade behind which nothing stands.

The bright pink balloon: The "outstanding achievement" to which all efforts have been reduced. Absurd, childish, disposable — this is how you've come to see the result of any investment of yourself. But the balloon is at least pink: there is life in it, lightness, something real that you perhaps don't value in yourself.

The four colorful parrots: The personification of a mocking, cynical inner voice. A symbol of a shallow mind and the mechanical repetition of others' judgments. Their action is a parody of a ceremony recognizing achievements, devoid of genuine respect.

The discarded sheet beneath the portrait: A symbol of a theatrical gesture — the unveiling of one's "shame." You yourself tear away the covers to present your apparent "emptiness" to the world (and to yourself).

4. Doom

"I am not fated to fly freely like other birds. The physical law of my universe is this: you can, of course, try to fly away. But my flight will always be the length of this chain. Why bother trying?"

IMAGE: A canary has perched on a stone ledge. Where it is located is completely unclear, as everything around is plunged into impenetrable darkness. The only visible object here is a large armchair, clearly not intended for a tiny canary. But it cannot fly away, because someone has put it on a chain. And now it is forever chained to this strange place.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about a model of upbringing where the goal was not to raise a free person, but to create an eternal child, a convenient companion, a "domestic pet" that would never leave or rebel, simply because it doesn't know that living otherwise is possible.

It is also about a deep and often invisible form of violence. Not about bruises and shouting, but about the theft of personality. This is what the phenomenon of "learned helplessness" looks like, an artificial halt in development. You weren't just forbidden—you were denied the tools to understand yourself and the world around you. The right to choose, to want, to refuse was not passed on to you. Instead, you were left in an infantile state because the "mode of a household item," a "pet," was deliberately cultivated in you, rather than that of a person.

From birth, you were kept "in the world of shadows," convinced that this was all of reality. Now you don't know that beyond the walls of this dark room there is sun, other people, and yourself—free. The tragedy is not that you are in chains, but that you have lost the very desire to look beyond your perch, because you have been convinced that you are just an animal, and animals don't need freedom.

A wild animal, taken into captivity, yearns for freedom. But a domestic one, born in a cage, considers the cage normal and is afraid to go outside. In your case, this is a form of tyranny where the victim doesn't even know they are a victim. You don't fight because you don't know what it means "not to be in a cage."

PRINCIPLES: Isolation from the world through the creation of an artificial reality ruled only by the will of the "master"; absolute powerlessness; turning a child into an object, not a subject; denial of development—deliberately keeping one in an infantile, dependent state; taking away the right to one's own life; a feeling of hopelessness, a "karmic trap," and fatalistic predetermination; paralysis of will.

THE SHADOW: The belief in "doom" is the most elegant defense against trying. If everything is predetermined, you don't have to try. Failure becomes not a defeat, but proof of your correctness. "I told you so." You cease to be a participant in life. You become a prophet of your own defeat. This gives a strange, cold dignity: you know the truth, while others still delude themselves. Darkness becomes home. The chain becomes the only familiar connection. And light becomes a threat.

THE ACTION: You don't have to dive into the darkness today and look for what the chain is attached to. You don't have to look at the light. Just acknowledge: the darkness is not a property of the room. The darkness is a property of your gaze. Yes, you don't know what's there. You don't know where the chain goes. Or if it can be broken. You don't know—because you've never tried. Ask yourself: "If I stopped calling this 'doom' and started calling it 'the darkness I'm afraid to look into'—what would change?" And then find the end of the chain. Not in the darkness—but here. Where does it attach to you? Who put on the collar? Was it your decision? Whose voice said, "You are not meant to"? You may not see the source. But you can see that the chain is not an extension of your body. It is fastened. That means it can be removed.

KEY IMAGES:

The tiny canary on a chain: A symbol of fragile inner potential, life force, hope, placed in conditions that make its realization impossible.

The chain disappearing into darkness: A symbol of slavery, which can manifest in various forms. For example, a psychological umbilical cord—one's own learned helplessness, guilt, duty, or fear of the big wide world; a generational trauma or scenario where the "end of the chain" is lost in the darkness of generations, and the "bird" doesn't even know who exactly is holding it: mother, grandmother, a distant ancestor, or simply "the way things turned out"; an internalized overseer, the voice of the "master" that has taken up residence inside you. And the darkness into which the chain disappears is your own subconscious. The person (the tyrant, the parent) may no longer be around, but the chain remains, because you yourself now control yourself, you yourself prevent yourself from flying away, thinking it's "fate"; the illusion of a tether, or imagined security—the canary is fastened, but the chain goes into the dark. This means you don't know what you're attached to. Maybe the chain hasn't been holding onto anything for a long time? Maybe the end of the chain lies freely in the darkness? But fear and ignorance prevent you from jerking it and checking. The chain is the belief in your own unfreedom.

The empty comfortable armchair: The automatism of slavery. The armchair hints that in this space, at least at one time, there was a "master" who created this situation. And now he is gone. After all, the armchair is empty. But the chain, the darkness, the canary's helplessness—all of this continues to exist independently, without him.

The surrounding darkness: The subjective feeling that there is no world beyond the room, as well as a protective reaction of the psyche unwilling to look at the source of fear. The darkness is not a property of the room, but a property of the gaze. It is there, where you are afraid to look. And in the darkness, perhaps, there is nothing scary at all.

5. Helpless

"Poor me, such a helpless creature. I wasn't made for this harsh adult world. Take me away from here! I want to be held and live in a dollhouse!"

IMAGE: A little, grimy child is upset and distressed: they were promised a beautiful playroom, but it turns out it first needs renovating. However, the child isn't going to listen to your excuses, let alone help with the renovation. They're just a child! It's hard to resist such an argument without feeling guilty and responsible for this helpless being. The painting on the wall unambiguously suggests the hierarchy here and who has what obligations towards whom.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about getting stuck in a childlike position because somewhere in the past—perhaps very early on—you learned the main lesson: to survive, you need to be helpless. If you sit on the floor, put on a dirty dress, and make a sad face—someone will surely come. Feel sorry for you. Feed you. Solve all your problems.

Now, in adulthood, this strategy kicks in automatically when there's a whiff of "renovation"—meaning a task requiring adulthood, mess, effort. It makes you look for someone to be "mommy and daddy" for you, to fix your reality while you sit and suffer.

PRINCIPLES: Lack of experience with independence; learned helplessness; perceiving the other as a resource; exploitation; refusal of responsibility; the belief that "the world owes me"; inability to form partnerships; power through manipulation.

THE SHADOW: Helplessness can become not just a strategy, but an instrument of power and even a profession. You know how to present different gradations of weakness to the world—from touching helplessness to a serious illness that truly requires care.

But there is a point of no return: one day, pleas for help turn into accusations and demands: "Look what you've driven me to!" Now it's not about being saved, but about making the "rescuers" admit their guilt and atone for it with their presence, care, their very lives.

At this point, helplessness ceases to be weakness and becomes absolute, invisible power. Where you poison life for yourself and for others.

THE ACTION: Try an experiment: choose one small thing that you usually delegate to someone else (make a call, decide something, do something, organize something) and do it yourself. Not because there's no one to help. But because you want to know what it's like to be someone who can.

KEY IMAGES:

The grimy child in an old, dirty dress: A symbol of a personality part frozen in development, an infantile part. Everything about this image is designed to evoke pity: age, clothing, posture, facial expression. It's a presentation of suffering as a reproach to the world: "Look what you've done to me."

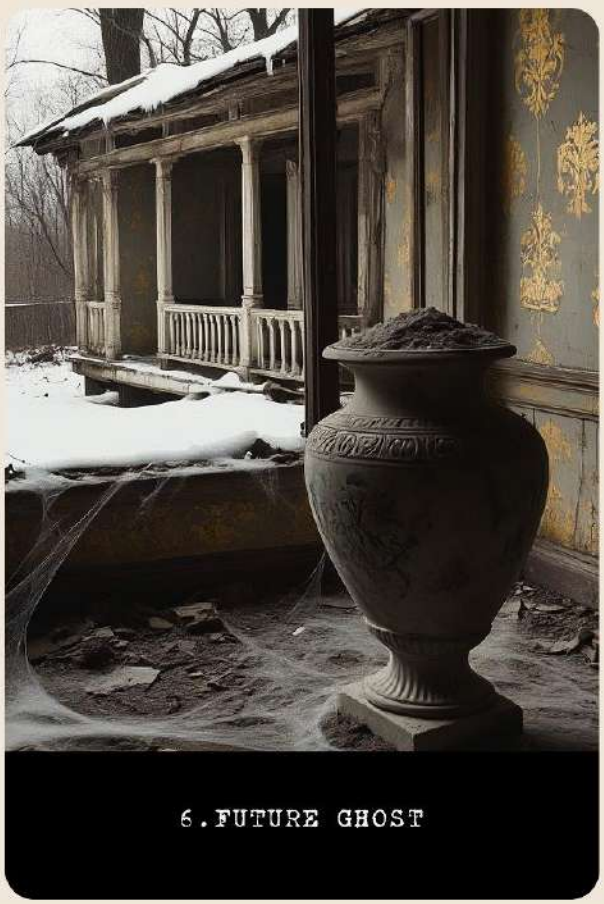
The family portrait labeled "Resources": Expectations directed at the surrounding world, which is perceived as a parental resource obliged to provide. A hierarchy exists within it: at the bottom is the child (me), who demands; at the top are the parents (the world, god, the state, a partner), who must provide.

The discarded teddy bear: A symbol of rejecting anything that could help, support, or entertain. The bear is nearby, but the hero doesn't need it. They are waiting not for a tool, but for a person.

6. Future Ghost

"When I think about the future, the only thing that comes to mind is death, as the sole and inevitable outcome of life."

IMAGE: A once cozy house has become completely uninhabitable. The window is broken, the walls are destroyed, cobwebs are everywhere. On the floor, tragically and proudly, stands an urn with ashes. Yet, for some reason, leaving this house is impossible.



WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about blocking the ability to see the future in depth. For an ordinary person, the future looks like a space with crossroads, options, probabilities, different "selves," different lives. You can turn here, you can turn there, you can even change your mind entirely.

For a person with this blockage, the future is flattened into a line that leads only to one point—death. Everything between "now" and "there" is not visible, doesn't matter, isn't felt as alive.

Perhaps they don't deny that tomorrow will come. But that tomorrow is not a place where anything can happen. It's just another day on the way to the end.

This blockage can occur at any age. Various reasons can trigger it. For example:

- *trauma of loss*, after which the future became associated with pain;
- *parental depression*, where a child grew accustomed to an atmosphere where "life isn't worth living";
- *a ban on dreams, devaluation of any plans* ("you'll understand when you're older," "it won't work out anyway");
- *the death of a loved one*, after which the future became a place where people no longer exist.

PRINCIPLES: Apathy and hopelessness as the background of life; loss of meaning and absence of perspective; depressive anticipation of the future; refusal to plan and dream under the slogan "what's the point?"

THE SHADOW: Deep down, you feel initiated because you think you know something about death that others don't. This gives an intoxicating sense of superiority, which makes it very difficult to abandon this ruined house with the urn and start living life in its full spectrum.

THE ACTION: You don't have to make grandiose plans. Just ask yourself one question, without pressure or obligation: "If death didn't exist, and I had to spend an eternity in this world — how would I want to arrange the space around myself? What would I do? Where would I live?"

KEY IMAGES:

The urn with ashes: A symbol of the expected end, the ashes of hopes, faith in the future, and everything that was once important. The urn stands tragically and proudly. This is an important detail. There is not only pain in it, but also dignity. The person carries their doom like a dark, exclusive feature: "I am the one who knows that everything will end badly."

The destroyed house with a broken window: A metaphor for an inner world dominated by a joyless void, devoid of living content.

The impossibility of leaving (the viewer is not outside the house, but inside): An irrational habit of minor-key emotions as the only form of connection with the world, life, and oneself.

7. Phoenix

"This can't go on any longer! Freedom or death!"

IMAGE: In a fit of fury, a tiny yellow canary has managed to break the chain to which it was bound. Perhaps its sight suddenly returned, from the emotional outburst, or perhaps someone pulled back the heavy curtains. Either way, the darkness that filled the room has dissipated. And now one can make out the walls, completely covered with portraits. And the empty armchair. And the room's furnishings. The canary can no longer be held here.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about reaching a boiling point that releases a tremendous resource, capable of breaking any chains. Usually, we think liberation comes through wisdom, therapy, a long path of awareness. But here—a different scenario. The canary didn't plan an escape. It simply reached a limit beyond which there is only death or freedom. And at that limit, a strength it never suspected opens up. Not because it became different. But because "this can't go on any longer" proved stronger than fear.

PRINCIPLES: Mobilization triggered by reaching the limit of endurance; activation of animal, instinctive strength; readiness to face what was frightening; rejection of defensive avoidance; exiting the role of victim.

THE SHADOW: You are so impressed by your own strength, rage, and your "final no" that this can become your new identity. Now you are the one who broke the chain. A rebel, a warrior, a survivor. You will start to get used to the adrenaline and despise those still sitting on the chain, not noticing that life after the break requires not pride, but patience.

THE ACTION: Turn off the voice of reason. Don't hold back. Your truest ally right now is the animal instinct that tells you what to do.

KEY IMAGES:

The canary: A symbol that even the most fragile creature is capable of unexpected strength, if suffering outweighs fear.

The gathering of frightening portraits on the wall: Introjects, destructive attitudes inherited from significant figures, society, culture, the ancestral system, which controlled you from within. They haven't disappeared, but you have at least seen them.

The broken chain in the beak: A symbol of victory over one's own internal prison.

The light in the room: A return to reality. You are beginning to see, for the first time, where you have been living all this time. In the light of day, everything that frightened you so much becomes simply "furniture."

8. Focus

"I set three 'don'ts' for myself. Don't dig into the past. Don't peer into the future. Don't judge myself. My soul became quieter, calmer. Not because the monster died. But because I stopped feeding it."

IMAGE: In a neat, well-kept living room—white flowers in a Japanese vase. A Persian carpet and a comfortable sofa. A white sheet falls in free folds to the floor, covering some kind of painting on the wall. There is so much in this room worthy of attention, besides that portrait.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you stop feeding your ghosts. Throughout the previous story of the "Black Sheep," you were, in one way or another, fighting with portraits. Suffering, fearing, trying to measure up. Here, you are not fighting. Not proving anything. Not repressing. Not trying to "work through and let go." You simply—stop looking. Silence arrives. And behind this silence, something that wasn't there before opens up: ordinary, non-heroic life. A sofa, a carpet, fresh flowers in a vase. You are not waiting until you "deal with the portrait" to start living. You are already living. Right now. In a room where the covered past hangs on the wall.

PRINCIPLES: Conscious refusal to fight with internal introjects; ceasing to feed patterns with your attention; transition from active repression to regular non-attention; separation that doesn't require amputation; a state of stable truce with one's own shadow; ordinary life as an alternative to heroic healing.

THE SHADOW: This useful skill can grow into a life strategy: "I don't look, so it doesn't exist." You stop noticing everything that causes discomfort. For example, real problems; an impending conflict; the truth that is inconvenient to see. And in this shadow, you lose not only pain, but also the ability to feel. And that means you lose your living connection with the world.

THE ACTION: Energy goes where attention goes. Imagine that your attention is electrical energy, available in a limited amount. You need to distribute it among various appliances: refrigerator, washing machine, heating. And you also have an "air purifier" inherited from your grandfather. It clearly pollutes the air, but you regularly turn it on. And there's not enough energy for the dishwasher, the washing machine, and the heating. How does that situation strike you? The air purifier is thoughts about the past, fear of the future, self-flagellation, and the like. Calculate how much energy you waste on that. And now think about where you would actually like to direct it?

KEY IMAGES:

The lived-in and well-kept living room: A direct antithesis to all previous "Black Sheep" cards. There is no mold, crumbling plaster, dirty floor, chaos here. This is a space where an adult person who copes lives. The card captures not the peak of healing, but its norm: everyday life in which pain has ceased to be the main event.

The portrait under the white sheet: The evolution of the "portrait" motif. Here it is present, but you cover it and stop "tripping over" it.

THE VALUABLE PERSON

What is this? The "Valuable Person" scenario is a set of behavioral strategies based on Exchange. And although the scenario has such a promising name, it is by no means about value. It is about a deal, the essence of which is: "I will give myself to you if you let me be with you." These cards are an inventory of the ways a person turns themselves into a commodity, a service, a decoration, or food.

There is a narrative arc here — from the first experience of rejection, through various ways to gain attention and recognition, to the discovery of one's own value — the core that was not involved in the bargaining.

You will not necessarily find all the strategies in yourself at once. Some evolve from one to another, some use one or two throughout their lives. The cards will help you see this and, perhaps, find a way out.

Structure of the scenario. The scenario consists of 8 cards. The very first card is the origin, the first experience of rejection that triggered the scenario. Cards 2–6 are five different strategies for "being valuable" (you may find one or several in yourself). Card 7 shows the denouement of the scenario, the crisis, the point where the strategies stop working. Card 8 is the way out, the return to genuine value.

Visual language of the scenario. The imagery of the "Valuable Person" is the aesthetic of different eras, from Rococo to Art Nouveau: tall wigs, patinated cabinets, frescoes, still lifes, a ballet stage in the spirit of the French Impressionists. Everything here is permeated with sweetness, people-pleasing, the desire to be liked. This is a world where even suffering must be beautiful, and lies must be appetizing. A world in which a person becomes a work of art — but ceases to be themselves.

1. The Object

"They put me in the closet so I wouldn't bother anyone. But when I'm needed again, they'll call me."

1. THE OBJECT

IMAGE: A tearful child peers out from behind a slightly open closet door. Most likely, they were punished by being put in the closet. Or maybe they were simply in someone's way.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the moment you first felt like an object. You were put away. Like a coat getting in the way on a chair, like a toy someone tripped over. You were small, and you found yourself in the dark. And life outside the closet continued—without you. And in that silence, a belief was born: I exist only when someone needs me. If I'm in the way—I can be put away. If I'm needed—taken back out.

You grew up. The closet remained in childhood. But the belief that your existence is unjustified unless you fulfill someone's need continues to live. That just being, without use, without function—you don't belong here.

Now you can look any way: independent, strong, self-sufficient. But deep down, you're still waiting to be called. Because you believe you belong to the world of things that must be valuable or useful for someone to want them.

PRINCIPLES: Experience of rejection at an early age; reduction of a person to the level of an object or function; formation of the belief: "I exist as long as I am needed"; loss of the right to inconvenient feelings; fear of being rejected or unnoticed.

THE SHADOW: You build a vast system of psychological defenses and destructive behavior patterns centered around the belief: "My existence is a priori illegitimate. I must constantly pay a tax for the right to occupy space in this world with my usefulness."

In adult life, this manifests in several forms, which can exist separately or flow into one another:

- Hyper-usefulness: You erase your personality, reducing yourself to a set of useful skills. You don't allow yourself to simply be. Rest for you is a crime, illness is laziness, asking for help is weakness. You are always "available" for work, partner, friends. This leads to complete burnout, loss of contact with your own desires (you don't know what you want yourself, but you know what others need). You attract people who use you, confirming your worldview.
- Preemptive Disappearance: You are so afraid of being "put away" that you leave yourself. You take up as little space as possible so you won't accidentally be "touched" or "brushed off." You're afraid to take initiative, express an opinion, defend boundaries. You adopt a "quieter than water, lower than grass" position. In relationships, you might suddenly disappear to avoid being rejected first. It's as if you're telling the world: "Don't throw me out, look, I'm already in the closet myself, I'm not bothering you." This leads to chronic loneliness, invisibility. You doom yourself to the very darkness you experienced in childhood, because the silence in the closet is safer than the risk of being discarded.
- The "Master of the Closet": The shadow can turn inside out. You, the child turned into an object, may grow up and start treating others as objects. This is a defense mechanism: "So I'm never put away again, I must be the one who does the putting away." You devalue others' feelings and needs. You perceive partners, children, subordinates not as living people, but as functions: "convenient," "useful," "pretty accessory." If a person stops performing their function (gets sick, tired, sad), you genuinely get angry or devalue them: "You're letting me down," "Stop whining," "Go away, don't bother me." This trauma can be reproduced across generations (such a parent, unintentionally, will put their own child in the same closet). Living people don't last long next to the "master."
- Toxic Self-Reliance: You are incapable of asking for help. Asking for help is perceived as admitting your own "malfunction" (like a broken thing), after which you will be guaranteed to be thrown away.
- Hypervigilance to Others' Moods: You constantly scan those around you: "Am I in the way? Am I still needed? Am I going to be put away?" This is a state of chronic anxiety.
- Panic from Idleness: You don't know how to relax. Because if you're not "functioning," you are overwhelmed by the terror of non-existence.
- Resentment towards the World: Deep within you lives a profound, often unexpressed anger that your existence must be justified. This resentment can break through in passive aggression, sarcasm, or unexpected outbursts of anger at those who "just live" (children, more relaxed partners).

THE ACTION: You don't have to get out of the closet today. You don't have to prove you're a person, not a thing.

Do less.

Just name the room you're sitting in right now. Name the color of the walls. The temperature of the air. The sounds outside the window.

Notice: you hear them, feel them, distinguish them. Things don't hear. Things don't feel. You haven't disappeared. You are here.

Even if the door is closed. Even if no one is calling. You exist—regardless of whether anyone needs you or not.

And now ask yourself—quietly, without anger: "Who and when first decided that I could be put away? And whose voice still repeats that decision?"

And just note: that voice is not a fact. It's an echo. And you are still here. Feel the air? Hear the sounds? Then you exist.

KEY IMAGES:

The child: A blank slate. An age when the world is not yet explained, and any event becomes significant. The first experience of self-definition through the actions of an adult.

The closet: A classifier of the child's essence: since you were put in the closet, it means you are a thing, like a coat, a hat, and so on.

2. People Pleaser

"Here it is, the main delicacy. Perfectly prepared. Juicy, with a golden crust, with the right side dish. I spent a long time learning this recipe. It's important that the dish looks appetizing. So that those for whom it's intended feel pleased. I am delicious! Try me! The centerpiece at this feast that no one asked for."

IMAGE: On the dining table sits a roast made from a tastefully prepared woman's head, beautifully garnished with apples and herbs. The head smiles sweetly, as if anticipating the pleasure it will bring to the guests. For appetite—a glass of red wine.

2. THE PEOPLE PLEASER

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the readiness to dissolve into others' expectations and desires. You've become so accustomed to it that you've stopped distinguishing where caring for others ends and absurdity begins. Your main task is to anticipate desires and fulfill them in the best possible way—with your body, time, life. You don't mind sacrificing them, because they hold value for you only insofar as they please others. Because being eaten is better than being unwanted. Better than being unnoticed. But if your "dish" is rejected—nothing of you will remain.

PRINCIPLES: Complete objectification of oneself; total people-pleasing; substitution of personality with a social function ("the dish"); being convenient as the main talent; accepting the role of "food" as natural and even desirable.

THE SHADOW: You've been food for so long that you've forgotten: food has no teeth. But you do have them. And sometimes they clench so hard your jaw locks.

Your shadow is rage. The rage you swallow along with the offense when you go unnoticed. The rage that rises when the guests are full and satisfied, and you are empty again. The rage that hisses inside: "I gave my life for this! Do you have any idea what that crust cost?!"

But you can't say it. A dish has no right to be angry. A dish must be tasty.

So the rage goes into the body—into tension, into fatigue, into illness. Or it turns outward as passive aggression: a forgotten birthday, a "random" lateness, icy silence. Or it strikes those who are weaker—children, a partner who is already "full" and doesn't have to notice.

Sometimes you hate those you please. Sometimes you hate yourself for not being able to stop. Sometimes you hate those who don't please and yet still live.

And you also hate those who allow themselves to be inconvenient, unpalatable.

But most often, you just smile. Because the smile is part of the recipe. And the recipe is all you have.

THE ACTION: Don't try to abruptly "stop being convenient" right now. If you recognized yourself in this card, any sudden move would be like trying to jump off the platter straight into boiling water. It's too painful and scary. Just start noticing. How often do you offer yourself, even when not asked? How often do you finish things for others that they should do themselves? How often does your "yes, of course, no problem" fly out before you've had time to ask yourself: "Do I even want to do this?"

Today, just observe yourself: "To whom and why did I serve myself on a platter today? And what would have happened if I had left that dish in the kitchen?"

KEY IMAGES:

The roast of a woman's head on an elegant porcelain platter: the ultimate degree of "offering oneself." Not just a piece, but an absurd and frightening festive dish, intended to delight and satiate others. This speaks to the scale of the sacrifice—not a part is given, but the essence, the mind, the personality (the head).

The almost playful, smiling expression: a sign of near-enjoyment, complete acceptance of this role, the automaticity of the pattern. The absence of suffering underscores the depth of identification with the "pleaser" function.

The perfect, festive presentation with garnish: attributes of hospitality, social approval. The scene shows how the pattern of people-pleasing masquerades as virtue, "caring for others." The heroine has literally served herself on a platter of societal expectations.

3. The Erased Me

"Everything is in its place. The flowers on the wallpaper match the sofa upholstery perfectly. The wig complements the painting's theme. The dress matches the wallpaper. 'How cozy you are! Gorgeous!' 'What an exquisite sofa! Where did you buy it?' I don't know where it was bought. Actually, I don't really care..."

3.THE ERASED ME

IMAGE: A luxurious living room in the style of the Louis XVI era: gilded frames, expensive textiles, refined wallpaper with floral patterns. A keen eye might also notice a white wig and a silk dress draped over some kind of figure.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the complete loss of oneself as a person. You have adapted to your surroundings for so long that one day you simply turned into the background — organic, but unnoticed.

To yourself, you are now a stranger hidden under a veil. You look beneath it — and there is nothing. Only "appropriateness" and "convenience," "acceptability." And nothing that could disrupt the harmony of the interior.

People around are attentive enough to notice a beautiful sofa and well-chosen wallpaper. But they don't see you. And it's not that they are arrogant. It's simply that there is no one to notice.

PRINCIPLES: Complete loss of one's own personality; dissolution; existence as an "element of decor" or furnishing; atrophy of the inner world, feelings, and desires; perception of oneself as a "beautiful object"; the ultimate degree of mimicry — becoming indistinguishable from the background that surrounds you.

THE SHADOW: Your shadow is omnipotent control through complete disappearance. It sounds paradoxical, but it works exactly like this.

What is the paradox? If you are the interior, you are invulnerable. Interiors are not rejected, not abandoned, not criticized (well, only if the wallpaper doesn't match). The interior simply is. It creates an atmosphere but demands no attention. This is absolute security, achieved at the cost of absolute disappearance. And deep down, you are proud of this mastery. You have done what the "People Pleaser" could not: you have become so elusive that you cannot be hurt. You simply do not exist.

· "The Tyrant of the Background": This is the deepest and most hidden part of the shadow. You control everything by participating in nothing. You create the perfect backdrop for others' lives, but you do not exist within them. You are the perfect wife who doesn't intrude. The perfect employee who never asks for a raise. The perfect friend who never burdens others with their problems. You are needed, but you are not seen. And in this lies a quiet, unspoken power: without me, this house would be uncomfortable, this office would be faceless, this life would be incomplete. I hold everything together while remaining invisible.

This is the position of a god who does not intervene, but without whom the world would collapse. Yes, you will never receive confirmation of your significance (because who praises the air?), but inside lives the belief: "I am that without which everything would fall apart." This is an immense burden of responsibility coupled with a complete absence of recognition.

· Total control through conformity: You didn't just merge — you became an expert in merging. You scan the space faster than you breathe. You always know what is appropriate and what is not. How to dress, what to say, how to look so as not to disturb anyone. Your control is so absolute that it has become automatic. You don't make decisions — you simply become correct. And you cannot stop, because if you stop scanning, the last thing you have will disappear: the illusion that you are managing your own safety. This brings you chronic anxiety. You never truly relax, because a relaxed interior is a messy interior. You are always on guard. Even when alone.

· Envy of those who are seen: You convinced yourself long ago that you need nothing. But inside, deep beneath the wallpaper, lives a longing. You don't even allow yourself to envy mentally. It's unattractive, inappropriate. But when you see people who take up space — laughing loudly, arguing, making mistakes, attracting attention — something clenches inside. You quickly look away and think: "How rude." Or: "Why show off like that." This is a defense. Because acknowledging envy means acknowledging that you want something. And wanting is dangerous. Wanting disrupts the harmony of the interior. You become a censor of others' expressions. You unconsciously choose partners who will also "not notice" you (because noticing is dangerous), or conversely — such loud and visible ones that against their background, your invisibility becomes even safer. But next to them, you will never become visible. You will only be the backdrop to their lives.

· The anger that isn't there: In the “People Pleaser”, there was rage — it seethed beneath the crust. Here, there is no rage. Because it is walled up inside the wall along with you. You don't get angry. At all. You don't remember the last time you were angry. It seems to you that you have "accepted," "let go," "grown beyond it." In reality, the anger simply has no outlet — it goes into the body, into illness, into chronic fatigue, into that very indifferent "I don't care" that echoes in the card's voice. This is not an absence of feelings. It is feelings buried alive. This leads to psychosomatics, apathy, depression without an obvious cause. You don't understand why you have no strength, why you don't want anything, why the world is so grey.

· Pride: You begin to take pride in your invisibility. You say about yourself: "I'm not demanding," "I don't need much," "I adapt to anything." You consider this your strength, your special mission — to be the one who creates beauty but demands no attention. Deep down, you feel superior to those who "need," who "demand," who "don't know how to be content with little." You are the perfect object. You cannot be improved. This pride firmly blocks the exit. Because why leave a state in which you are perfect? Why become a person when you can be a perfect armchair? You don't see a problem — you see an achievement.

THE ACTION: You have been the background for so long that you shouldn't try to become bright and noticeable suddenly. That would only frighten the one inside. Take small steps. Very quiet ones. They are louder than any words.

Take off your shoes and stand on the floor.

Feel the surface with your soles. Is it hard? Cold? Warm? Close your eyes and just note: you are standing. You are taking up space. Small, quiet space, but you are occupying it. Place your hand on your chest. Feel it rise and fall. You are breathing. Interiors don't breathe. But you — you breathe.

Stay like this for three minutes. Do nothing. Just notice: you exist.

All day, once an hour, ask yourself: "What do I want right now?"

You don't have to act on it. Just notice.I want to turn away from the window. I want to fix my hair.

I want this conversation to end. I want tea, not coffee.

Your task is to remember that you can want something. Even if that "want" is tiny, inconvenient, strange. Interiors don't want. But you — you can.

Do something that leaves your mark on the space.

Not for beauty, not for coziness, not for others. Just to say: "I was here."

Move the cup on the table to where it's comfortable for you. Hang your jacket not on the "usual" hook, but on the one that's closer. Leave a book open on the windowsill. Buy one flower — not for a vase, but just for yourself, and put it where you will see it.

This is not a rebellion. It's a reminder: a space has more than just an interior. It has someone who lives in it. You.

And now, go to the mirror.

Don't look at your hairstyle, don't look at whether you're dressed "appropriately." Look into your eyes.

Say quietly, even in a whisper: "I see you."

Even if it seems there's no one there. Even if you want to look away. Just be with the one you haven't noticed for so long.

You don't have to know her. You don't have to understand her. You can simply begin to notice her.

KEY IMAGES:

The faceless lady: A symbol of the absence of individuality. This image continues the evolution from the previous card. There, the head was served on a platter — the face still existed, it smiled, it participated in the process of pleasing. Here, there is no face, because it has become unnecessary. What need does something that has become part of the interior have for a face?

The fusion of the figure with the surroundings: A symbol of total mimicry. The wig continues the painting, the dress repeats the wallpaper, the hands blend into the wall. This is a literal visualization of what becomes of a person who spends years scanning others' expectations. You become what surrounds you. You are a convenient, suitable, silent piece of furnishing. You have ceased to be distinguished from the background.

4. Admission Price

"Applause. Gazes. Adoration. I understand perfectly well what you need, gentlemen. And it's for sale. But the price is considerable. After all, I am a valuable lot."

IMAGE: An airy, refined ballerina performs a new dance on stage, one she has long prepared for. The dance is not simple: in it, she shows the audience something that even the most sophisticated cannot resist. And although the spectators came to enjoy art, the ballet has turned into an auction.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you learned to find the "red button" in another person and press it to get what you want. You realize the power of your influence and know how to put it into circulation, offering the world something intimate (talent, body, soul, time) in exchange for recognition and material goods. But in the world you've created, your value exists only when you are being watched. The loneliness backstage is unbearable, so you are ready to do anything for the spotlight.

This is a story about commodity-money relations disguised as high feelings or art. The ballerina on this card is not a victim; she is the main director of the auction. But the price of her triumph is the impossibility of returning to simply "being"; now she is doomed to "being bought."

A question for reflection: what do you actually want — to be appreciated for your worth, or to be sold at auction? And most importantly: what will remain of you when the applause fades and the price tags are lowered?

PRINCIPLES: Awareness of one's exclusivity as a commodity; monetization of attractiveness; virtuoso playing on others' weaknesses; existence as a performance; turning oneself into a commodity; equating worth with price; substituting relationships with transactions.

THE SHADOW: You have become addicted to your own power. You are so accustomed to managing the bidding, so merged with the role of "auction director," that you can no longer exist otherwise.

- You can't turn off the performance: Even when the spotlights go out and you are alone, you continue to play. Because without the game, without the role, without the stage, you don't know who you are. You've tried turning it off — there's emptiness there. Or fear. Or both.
- You no longer believe in unconditionality: You are so used to everything having a price that you've stopped noticing moments when you are loved just because. If someone offers you intimacy without a transaction, you either don't believe it, devalue it, or expect a catch. You've unlearned how to receive without giving in return.
- You become hostage to demand: Your self-esteem is tied to whether there is demand for you. If the signs go up, you're a queen. If the hall is silent, you're a zero. You don't know how to feel your own value outside the context of others' burning eyes. And this makes you endlessly vulnerable, even though outwardly you look like the one with all the power.
- You despise those who buy you: Deep down, you don't respect them. They are functions, wallets, buttons so conveniently pressed. But in this contempt lies a trap: you depend on those you despise. Their attention, their money, their desire — these are the only things that confirm your existence.
- You don't allow yourself to truly want: You're used to giving others what they want and getting yours in return. But your own desires — not about money or status, but about something alive, warm, vulnerable — you've hidden deep. Sometimes you even think they don't exist. But they do. It's just that the entrance to them has become paid, even for you.

THE ACTION: You've been on stage for so long that the stage has become your home. Today, we won't ask you to leave the stage. We'll just open the door backstage a little.

Find something that isn't for sale. Something you do not for high praise or to boost your attractiveness, but just because. Because you enjoy it.

Ask yourself quietly, without judgment: "Who was I before I became a valuable lot? Who am I when I'm not performing?"

Don't look for an answer. Just place the question inside. Sometimes it answers not with words, but with relief. Or tears. Or a strange warmth where it's been cold for a long time.

And now remember: Yes, there is a stage. But backstage, there is you. Not a commodity. Not a lot. Not a function. You.

KEY IMAGES:

Ballerina on stage: A symbol of performance, play, manipulation disguised as high art.

The gesture of "showing what's under the skirt": The true purpose of the performance: provoking forbidden desire and a "face-to-face" product demonstration.

The spectators: Objects of manipulation, possessing money, status, power.

5. Thorn Crown

"Look, this is how it's done. First, the base: impeccable pallor. Then, the accent: tears. They should be visible from afar, so it's better to paint them with cinnabar. And finally, the main attribute: the thorny crown of suffering. Just make sure the thorns aren't too prickly, or you might hurt yourself. Though, for the sake of dividends, one might suffer a little. But better make it beautiful, palatable. After all, 'torments' must be fruitful."

5. THORN CROWN

IMAGE: A girl in an aesthetic thorn crown, resembling an icon, suffers beautifully. Caring hands of those who have taken the bait comfort her.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you turned your suffering into capital. You discovered that pain attracts attention, others' pity gives power, and the role of the victim yields dividends — care, guilt, admiration, obligation. And you learned to use this. You know which angle of your face is most touching. Which intonation to choose to make the listener's heart clench. How long to hold the pause for pity to ripen. Pain ceased to be just a feeling — it became a tool. You put on your crown of thorns not because you have no other choice, but because it works, making others approach, comfort, feel indebted.

PRINCIPLES: Turning suffering into a tool for obtaining care, attention, and other social dividends; performativity of pain; substituting feelings with their imitation; manipulating others through the image of a victim.

THE SHADOW: Suffering and pain become your only source of intimacy and attention. You unconsciously choose situations where you will be the victim. Sometimes you truly exaggerate, but you can also become seriously ill from ailments rooted in psychosomatics.

You are capable of making others feel guilty in your presence, guilty if they are not there and do not care for you. You don't ask directly — you hint at how hard things are for you, how no one helps, everyone abandons you. You "don't accuse," but with your whole being you say: "You could save me. Will you really just pass by?" It's impossible to breathe freely around you. People stay not out of love, but out of a sense of duty. But one day they run away — and remain guilty for life. And you'll have something to complain about to new potential "debtors."

You devalue others' problems, you don't know how to sympathize. But as soon as someone becomes the center of pity, irritation rises within you. You isolate yourself from genuine closeness. It's impossible to be sick, sad, or weak around you — because your pain will always "win."

THE ACTION: Try today, just once, not to show your pain. Not because it isn't there. But because it is yours alone. Let no one know. Let no one feel sorry. Let the crown stay in its box.

Ask yourself: "Who do I become when I stop being the 'holy martyr'? Do I have a face without cinnabar tears?"

KEY IMAGES:

Bloody tears painted with cinnabar: A symbol of artificial feelings, theatricality, aimed at attracting attention and evoking compassion.

A crown of berries and flowers (instead of thorns): Suffering as a source of "fruits" (attention, pity, approval). It is devoid of real pain but saturated with symbolic "sweetness."

The halo on the wall: Social confirmation and glorification of the martyr's role. External approval of this performance.

The comforting hands: Attention, social dividends.

The overall aesthetic of the "beautiful martyr": The fusion of images of death, suffering, and beauty into a single product for consumption.

6. Charming Abomination

"Just look at these beautiful, ripe, juicy fruits! A still life worthy of a museum. What's that you say? Something is moving down there? An unpleasant smell emanates? What nonsense! You're imagining things. Don't be so picky. Everything here is fresh."

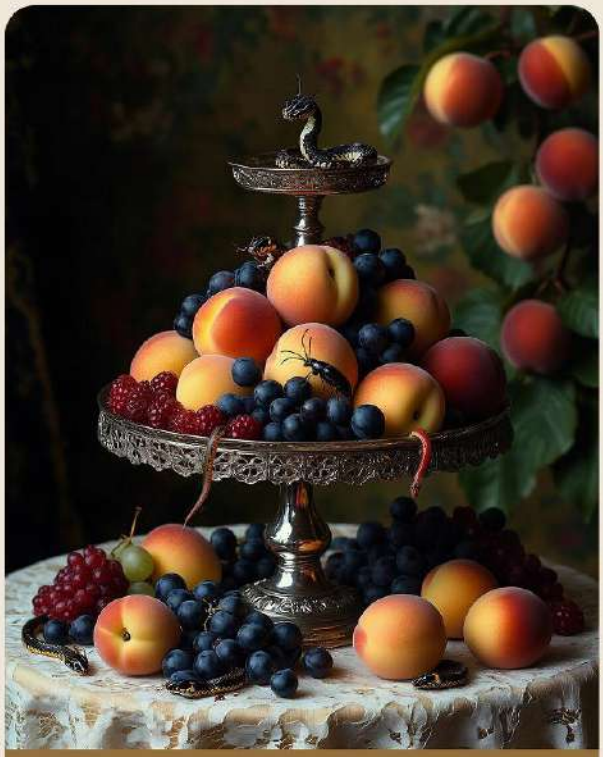
IMAGE: On a charming fruit stand, upon a white lace tablecloth — bountiful, juicy fruits. But if you look closely, you can notice vile parasites swarming beneath this beauty.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how unacceptable things have become the norm for you. In order to maintain a fragile balance, you are willing to endure, conceal, "cover up the bruises," and believe that this is absolutely normal.

PRINCIPLES: Self-deception; deception; systematic embellishment and denial of painful truth; creating a beautiful but false reality; wasting energy on masking a problem instead of solving it.

THE SHADOW: You are a master of presentation. On social media, you have a beautiful life. In conversations, the right stories. Externally, everything is so good that no one can find fault. You expend colossal energy maintaining the facade. You find explanations for everything that threatens to shatter the illusion. Partner is cold — they're tired. Work isn't fulfilling — that's how it is everywhere now. Health is failing — age, environment. You fiercely cut off anyone who tries to open your eyes. Your energy goes not towards solving real problems, but towards further maintaining the perfect image, masking the parasites and the unpleasant smell.

But you aren't lying to others — you are lying to yourself. And, in fact, you've succeeded: you really no longer see the parasites. You truly don't smell the odor. You've developed an immunity to the truth, because the truth would destroy this beautiful fruit stand. And the parasites, meanwhile, proliferate in silence.



6. CHARMING ABOMINATION

Deep down, you are very tired. Maintaining a perfect still life is a job with no days off. You have to be constantly on guard, and because of this, you find yourself irritated more and more often. One day you'll be completely exhausted, and then everything will simply fall apart.

THE ACTION: Don't try to overturn the whole fruit stand today. Don't look at all the insects at once.

Just allow yourself to notice one "unpleasant whiff" that you usually ignore. One thought you push away. One feeling you replace with a pretty picture.

Ask: "What do I prefer not to notice in order to preserve a beautiful image for myself and others?"

KEY IMAGES:

The fruit stand with ripe, juicy fruits on a white lace tablecloth: A symbol of ideal external presentation.

The disgusting parasites swarming in the fruits: Toxic, hidden mechanisms: manipulation, calculation, parasitism, abuse, and so on invisibly poisoning what seems so ideal.

The contrast between the beautiful and the ugly: Visualization of deep hypocrisy and a split. The illusion of wholeness, about to crumble.

7. What Remained of Me

"Once upon a time, I was so needed..."

IMAGE: At a dump, among spoiled fruits and withered flowers, lies a broken porcelain doll.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the moment of realization that your value to others was purely functional. You were convenient, useful, needed — exactly as long as you fulfilled someone's needs. Once the function is exhausted, you turned into an unnecessary object, discarded without regret. The card captures the point of no return: the old strategies for obtaining love and recognition through "being needed" have collapsed, leaving you alone with the question of whether anything existed beyond this function at all.

PRINCIPLES: The collapse of strategies where value was determined by function; the loss of former foundations built on the perception of oneself as a thing.

THE SHADOW: For years, you convinced yourself that being needed was the same as being loved. You took pride in your indispensability, endured inconvenience, swallowed grievances — all to feel valuable. But now, looking at the fragments, you are forced to admit: you were not loved. You were used. And you always knew it — you just never allowed yourself to face the truth, because then you would have had to admit that you yourself agreed to this deal.

The bitterest part is the quiet voice inside whispering: "Maybe they were right? Maybe there really is nothing to me besides the function? Maybe I really am worthless if I can't be used?" The shadow of the card is to believe this voice. To finally bury yourself in the trash, to agree that you are just a broken doll, whose place is among rotten fruit and beetles. After all, admitting you are a nobody is easier than searching within yourself for something so valuable that you are not willing to give it to anyone.

THE ACTION: You have been needed by others for so long that now, left without that need, you seem empty to yourself. Today, we will not gather the fragments. We will not look for glue. We will simply be near what is.

And remember: no matter how terrible it feels right now, you have gained something very valuable. You have finished being a thing. You no longer need to be beautiful, needed, or useful for someone. Now you can simply be: lie there and feel the rain tapping on the porcelain. And discover that you no longer belong to anyone but yourself. Today is not the end — today is the beginning. Even if it's hard to believe right now.

KEY IMAGES:

The porcelain doll: A symbol of a dehumanized and devalued personality, thrown "to the dump" as useless.

Cracks and chips: The consequences of years of bending to others' expectations and needs. Traumas that accumulated but were never processed.

Rotten fruits, withered flowers, and beetles: Symbols of the decay of the values upon which the strategies of the "Valuable Person" scenario were built.

8. The Pit

"What I discovered..."

IMAGE: From a rotten apricot, a whole, healthy pit remains. Someone's palms carefully hold it, understanding that inside it lies an entire tree.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about returning to yourself — not the one who was expected, not the one who is needed, but the one who is.

You were pulp for so long — juicy, tasty, convenient for consumption — that you almost forgot: there was always a pit inside. Hard. Inedible. Useless for those who just want a snack. And it is this pit that survived when all the pulp rotted, when all the roles fell away, when all the strategies of "being needed" collapsed.

For the first time, you are holding in your hands not what others wanted from you, but what you truly are. And this is not emptiness. This is potential. A whole tree that hasn't even begun to grow because all your energy went into being edible.

This card is about finally holding in your hands that from which you can grow. And for the first time, you have no intention of giving it away to anyone.

PRINCIPLES: Discovery of an indestructible core; rejection of the role of "food"; the moment of returning to oneself; the value of potential; transition from the concept "I am what you think of me" to the concept "I am."

THE SHADOW: Loneliness disguised as independence. You have finally found yourself — your core, your foundation, that part that cannot be eaten, used, or appropriated. And this is a great achievement. But now a new risk appears: you are so afraid of becoming "food" for others again that you choose to let no one in. Trust no one. Share your time, space, life with no one. But in isolation, potential cannot sprout — for that, others are needed.

THE ACTION: Remember something you genuinely love — not because it is right, fashionable, or circumstances demand it. But just because. Completely meaningless and useless. Even silly. But for yourself.

KEY IMAGES:

The pit held between palms: A symbol of true potential and a person's genuine essence. A gesture of claiming yourself for yourself. You no longer give yourself away left and right. You hold your core in your hands, and this is an intimate, almost sacred gesture. The pit is not on display, not for sale, not even in the ground — it is in your palms. You are simply getting to know it. For the first time.

The absence of pulp: A symbol of the decay of all former roles and survival strategies. No longer need to be tasty, holy, or needed. Only the most important thing remains. Before, you thought that without the pulp you were nothing. But it turns out — the pulp was only a hindrance. It attracted those who only wanted to eat. Without it, you became invisible to "consumers" for the first time. And this is a gift.

The wholeness of the pit: It is not broken, not cracked, not damaged. Despite the rotting of the pulp, the parasites, the dump, despite years of serving others' appetites — the core has survived. This speaks to the unbroken nature of what truly matters.

The palms holding the pit: These are no longer others' hands reaching out to comfort or buy. These are your own hands. Or the hands of someone who truly sees and understands you. In any case, it is a gesture of care, not consumption.

THE COMFORT ZONE

What is this? This scenario is about how we try to make life predictable in order to avoid encountering its main property: uncertainty. We seek safety, peace, silence. We want to control what concerns us and turn away from what disturbs us. But gradually, strategies of protection turn into strategies of escape. And escape — into a trap.

Structure of the scenario. There are 8 cards in total in the scenario. Cards 1 and 2 — entering the comfort zone. It all starts with a healthy need for solitude, a pause, personal space. With the desire to trust the flow, let go of control, and stop fussing. At this stage, we believe we are simply resting — temporarily withdrawing to gather strength.

Cards 3 and 4 — deepening. But the pause drags on. We put on a mask and earplugs, ceasing to see and hear what demands a reaction. To shield ourselves from unpleasant experiences, we learn not to notice others' pain. The comfort zone becomes a zone of insensitivity. We are no longer resting — we are hiding.

Card 5 — the point of no return. The comfort zone where we once took shelter becomes a cage from which it is no longer possible to escape on our own.

Cards 6 and 7 — the exit. But the scenario does not end in a dead end. We enter a space where rebuilding is possible through therapeutic deep dependence, trust, and safety — which no longer isolate, but nourish. Then comes the moment of birth. We find a reason to leave the comfort zone: not out of fear, not out of obligation, but out of love and reverence for what has become more important than our own comfort.

Card 8 — a practical technique, where step by step, with focus on the process, we begin a conscious movement through life.

Connection with the "Valuable Person" Scenario. The "Comfort Zone" scenario rarely starts from scratch. It is preceded by a moment when the world proved too dangerous and pain too unbearable. The "Pit" card from the "Valuable Person" scenario is one possible entry point into this scenario. You begin to treat yourself with tenderness and care. And to protect yourself from possible trauma, you start building an impenetrable defense around yourself.

Visual language of the scenario. The visual language of this scenario is a reference to the aesthetic of Woody Allen, with jazz, intellectual conversations, and a world where even tragedy looks aesthetic and pain is an occasion for a witty remark.

We turn to Woody Allen when we want certainty in uncertainty. We know what will be there: intellectual jokes, neurotic heroes, psychotherapists they visit for decades, jazz, New York, conversations about death and the meaning of life over breakfast. It is cozy, even when the topic is catastrophe. His films are a blanket we wrap ourselves in to feel intelligent and a little sad, but safe.

The "Comfort Zone" scenario is precisely about that. About how we create a cozy bubble for ourselves to avoid confronting reality.

1. The Flask

"For relaxation and safety, I found the perfect form. It's the same kind experienced perfumers use to store their flawless creations. Airtight, secure, nothing extra — the highest form of rational arrangement."

IMAGE: In a transparent perfume flask, with the lid tightly closed, a girl sits comfortably with a book.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you return to yourself through coziness, silence, and predictability. In this space, you can stop being "for others." Here there is no need to be beautiful, convenient, or correct – there is an opportunity to exhale. The card speaks of the right to temporary non-existence in the social field. About how sometimes the only thing needed for recovery is drawn curtains, a book, and the knowledge that no one will enter without knocking.

PRINCIPLES: A healthy need for seclusion; personal space; a sensory pause; temporary withdrawal from the social sphere.

THE SHADOW: Inside your "flask" it's safe and sterile. Gradually, you begin to perceive any contact with the "outside air" as aggression. You have become extremely sensitive to criticism, noise, others' emotions. The world beyond the glass seems coarse, toxic, and requiring too much effort. A position forms: "I am a delicate flower, and the world is a concrete mixer," which leads to avoiding any situations that might be uncomfortable.

You begin to strive to sterilize your life. In contacts with people, "imperfect" feelings (anger, envy, irritation from others) are not allowed, and your own "ugly" emotions are excluded from your life. This leads to emotional anemia, where inside the flask it's quiet, empty, and safe, but there is no longer life, because life is always chaotic.

The safe haven turns into a gilded cage. You begin to take pride in your isolation, considering those around you too primitive to understand your depth. Withdrawal ceases to be a pause and becomes a way of life. The world shrinks to the size of a room, and any calls to go outside are perceived as an encroachment on the sacred right to comfort.

Instead of recovering and going out with renewed energy, you get "stuck" in this state. Energy has nowhere to flow (the exit from the flask is closed). This turns into apathy, when you no longer have the strength even for a book, just lying around and scrolling through a feed. Rest turns into stagnation.

Airtightness implies complete silence, and you begin to demand that the world be "soundless." In relationships with loved ones, this can result in a rigid demand: "don't touch me while I'm in the flask." Gradually, you stop noticing that your right to a sensory pause is being realized at the expense of others, who bear the burden of daily life, problem-solving, and communication with the world. This can become a form of passive aggression and emotional unavailability.

Your flask has become the sole "ideal form." Now you deny the value of anything that is not a "flask." You devalue spontaneity, travel, noisy company, or simply "imperfect" everyday life. You begin to think that only your way of existing (coziness, silence, a book) is correct, and everything else is vanity and emptiness. This leads to emotional rigidity and an inability to adapt to change.

These shadow manifestations rarely all appear at once. As a rule, you might notice one or two in yourself.

THE ACTION: Right now, the lid on your "flask" is tightly closed. Create a valve for it: make it a rule not just to withdraw, but to mark the conditions for exiting. For example: "I'll be in the 'flask' for two hours, and then I'll definitely come out." This creates a bridge between the world inside and the world outside.

Consciously leave room in your schedule for "non-sterile" events. Once a week, do something that doesn't fit the aesthetic of the "flask": go to a noisy place, meet with a person who might tire you. Train your "immunity to chaos" so that encountering it doesn't come as a shock.

And don't forget: the "flask" is not all of life!

KEY IMAGES:

The flask: Personal space. Its transparency and airtightness are a metaphor for the attempt to control everything that is let inside.

The girl with a book in a relaxed pose: A sensory pause, a symbol of being in a mode of "quiet recharging."

The cushion behind her back, dimmed light, drawn curtains: The aesthetic of safety, when the outside world disappears and peace sets in.

2. Passengers of Fate

"We've settled in with maximum comfort. Everything is going smoothly, no jolts. Isn't this the best sign that we're on the right path? We are passengers, and our driver is Fate itself. Why strain, pull levers, or look at a map when you can trust the smooth ride? After all, discomfort is a sign of error. And it's so comfortable here... Who said we aren't moving? We are waiting for a miracle! Fate is like a taxi driver who knows best the address we need to be taken to. Although... come to think of it, the cart has been on the edge of a cliff for a while now... When it finally does move, its route might come as a surprise."

IMAGE: Three passengers are comfortably settled in a cart, enjoying champagne and cheerful conversation. They are waiting for departure, which is impossible since the cart is designed for amusement rides, not transportation. However, they could easily perish because, left to its own devices, their "vehicle" is slowly rolling towards the very edge of a cliff.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you think you are "on your way" because you've made yourself comfortable in something that looks like transport. In reality, you are sitting in an amusement cart and have voluntarily handed the helm over to blind chance, mistaking the absence of discomfort for a true sign.

PRINCIPLES: Illusion of movement; passive waiting; renouncing personal responsibility and active action under the guise of trusting the flow or fate; preferring comfortable inaction over risky but conscious choice; a deep belief that the absence of discomfort and effort is the main sign of the "right" path, along which Fate itself is leading you; the risk of being carried over the cliff by blind chance.

THE SHADOW: This is voluntary blindness. You pay for comfort and the illusion of movement with your ability to influence your own life. Payment comes due the moment the cart plunges over the cliff, and it turns out no one was at the helm the whole time.

2. PASSENGERS OF FATE

- Renouncing authorship of your life. You hand over control to "Fate" (circumstances, other people, the boss, partner, the "flow"), but continue to consider yourself the main character. This removes responsibility for failures (fate took a turn) and dilutes authorship in successes (got lucky). Gradually, you unlearn making decisions. Any need for a choice (even a small one) causes stupor or anxiety, because the "driver" (Fate) is silent.

- The hedonistic trap. You mistake comfort for truth and stop distinguishing between "I feel good" and "this is right for my development." Gradually, you begin to avoid any strain, any "jolts," considering them a signal of error.

- Mutual hypnosis. The image shows a cheerful company. The shadow manifests in that people with this mindset are attracted to each other and create a "circle of inaction." In such an environment, any active action is devalued ("don't fuss," "go with the flow," "take it easy"). Friends and loved ones become not a stimulus for growth, but an anesthetic. You drink champagne together, convincing each other that you are "on your way," and drown out the anxiety of anyone who happens to look over the side and see that the cart is stationary (or already rolling towards the cliff).

- Loss of contact with reality. Since the "cart" isn't moving, but you believe you are a "passenger," a disconnect in perception occurs. You live in a fantasy world about the future ("soon the universe will deliver me to success"), but completely ignore signals from the present. You don't notice relationships crumbling, money running out, health deteriorating. All this is perceived as annoying obstacles on the ideal "path of fate" or the "universe," not as a consequence of your own inaction.

- Catastrophe as an inevitable surprise. The card directly states the cart is on the edge of a cliff. The shadow is the shock of colliding with reality. You dwelt in the illusion of a smooth ride for so long that when the cart finally does fall (layoff, divorce, illness, crisis), it's perceived as a blow of fate, a betrayal by the world, an injustice. You sincerely don't understand how this happened, because "everything was so good and calm." The crisis arrives suddenly, and you have no resources to cope because the skill of navigation (the willpower muscle) has atrophied.

- Aestheticizing inaction under the guise of "Trusting the flow." This is the shadow masking itself as spirituality or wisdom. In a healthy form, trusting the flow is active relaxation. In the shadow form, it's passive laziness. You use beautiful concepts ("non-resistance," "letting go," "everything in its time") to justify your apathy and fear of action. You confuse humility with willlessness, and acceptance with capitulation. This makes you immune to advice, as any suggestion to act shatters against the wall of "spiritual" fatalism.

THE ACTION: The concept "Fate leads" is a very convenient thing to absolve yourself of responsibility. Ask yourself one simple question: "If I knew for sure that Fate didn't exist and everything depended only on my choice, would I change something in this situation?" If the answer is "yes," then your "trust in the flow" is just an excuse for inaction.

Decide where you are going, and stop waiting for a miracle. And if doubts remain, honestly answer yourself: how far have you actually progressed? If the answer is "not at all," it's time to take some action. For example:

· Take back the helm. Don't try to control everything at once. Start making conscious micro-choices. Every day, perform one action that you choose, not "circumstances." Buy a different coffee than usual; take a different route; decline an uninteresting meeting. Feel the taste of choice.

· Step out of the crowd. The company in the cart are those who reinforce your illusion. You don't have to break off relations, but you can change your role. To start, stop waiting for the "company" to start moving. Instead, begin to sometimes "get out of the cart" yourself, walk around, explore the surroundings. Then you can come back and tell them what you saw. Some of the "passengers" might look over the side too. Some might call you crazy. It doesn't matter. The main thing is you stop being part of the mass.

· Conduct an "audit of the champagne." In the image, people drink champagne to avoid noticing the cliff's edge. "Champagne" is anything that distracts you from questions about meaning and direction. Honestly make a list of what constitutes your personal "champagne." Endless TV series? Alcohol? Empty chatter? Scrolling through feeds? These things aren't bad in themselves, but if they drown out the inner question "Where am I going?", then they are anesthesia.

KEY IMAGES:

The amusement cart on the edge of a cliff: A symbol of a passive way of moving through life, where you can be carried anywhere.

The cheerful company in the cart: Visualization of the mindset "Let's just let go of the situation."

Lack of control: Handing over control of your life to blind chance.

3. Nope!

"Don't drag me into these problems! And don't bother me! I know: the moment I look at you, I'll have to solve something, rush somewhere, get nervous about something, worry about something... And do I need that? I prefer to see nothing and hear nothing."

IMAGE: Having put on a thick pink sleep mask and earplugs, she enjoys peace and comfort, from which nothing short of an earthquake could rouse her.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This is the story of how you choose not to see a problem, hoping it will disappear on its own. The price for such peace is a complete loss of contact with reality and the risk of one day taking off the mask only to discover that the world around you has collapsed while you "saw nothing and heard nothing."

PRINCIPLES: Conscious sensory and emotional blockade; rejection of feedback from the world; the illusion of invulnerability through isolation; suppressed anxiety behind a facade of serenity; a presumption of the world's hostility.

THE SHADOW: The main thing to expect is an accumulation of many problems and missed opportunities.

Your brief sensory break, which you experienced in the "Flask" card, has here turned into a lifestyle. You have become so accustomed to your "sleep mask" and "earplugs" that you have stopped noticing signals that are impossible not to notice: Debts piling up? "I don't look at the statements." Health deteriorating? "I won't go to the doctor, they'll say something terrible." Relationships cracking? "I don't want to talk about this." You systematically destroy feedback, without which any organism goes blind and perishes.

You have turned personal space into a cult of your own peace. An entire world has been reduced in your mind to the level of "problems" that threaten your tranquility.

You may cover up your blockade with beautiful words: "I'm just taking care of myself," "I'm resourcing," "That's their karma, not mine." This makes you immune to criticism, because any reproach shatters against a wall of convincing arguments that call for nothing bad.

Any signal from the outside (even a positive one: a job offer, a new acquaintance, an opportunity to move) meets an automatic "NO" reflex. This is no longer a conscious refusal, but a pathological inability to say "yes" to anything that requires effort, change, or presence. Along with problems, you miss the opportunities that life is ready to offer you.

THE ACTION: The main fear of this card is that any contact with a problem will demand too much and destroy your peace. Today, let's choose just one, the smallest problem, to allow into your field of vision. Let it be something not scary. For example, pay an old bill, reply to one message, or throw out spoiled food from the refrigerator. Do this without expecting that an avalanche of new obligations will follow.

KEY IMAGES:

The sleep mask and earplugs: A conscious choice to see and hear nothing.

The serene expression: Real life has been successfully excluded from one's worldview, bringing an apparent sense of calm and comfort.

4. Not My Business

"What does it matter what happens in the world? Every day someone gets sick, someone dies. But that doesn't cancel the celebration of life. After all, you only live once! So let's live it joyfully and pleasantly. Because if you dive into problems that don't concern you, you'll soon go under yourself. Cheers!"

IMAGE: A group of young people is having a good time on a cruise ship. They are completely unconcerned with what is happening overboard: they paid for a vacation and are not obligated to participate in saving the ship that is sinking right under their noses.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how you go out into the world but take with you the right to ignore what disturbs your peace. You are not alone — around you is a company that shares this mindset, and every toast becomes confirmation: "We have the right to our 'good life,' regardless of what's happening around us."

The main illusion here is that your celebration and someone else's disaster are parallel events, unrelated. That you can drink champagne while a ship sinks, and this does not make you a participant in what's happening. But the card raises the question: where is the boundary of what "concerns me"? When does someone else's grief cease to be "someone else's"? And doesn't your celebration itself become a form of participation — participation in not seeing, in the silent agreement that the catastrophe "overboard" is none of your concern?

This card is about the breakdown of empathy as a capacity and the aestheticization of indifference. About how easy it is to justify one's insensitivity with the philosophy "you only live once" and how dangerous it is to confuse "healthy boundaries" with a complete loss of ability to respond to what is happening nearby. Because sooner or later, the sea in which another is drowning is the same sea upon which you sail. And the railing between "here" and "there" can disappear faster than you can finish your champagne.

PRINCIPLES: Renouncing co-presence under the guise of "healthy egoism"; justifying indifference with the philosophy "you only live once"; the breakdown of the basic human capacity to notice another's pain when it falls outside one's personal comfort zone; the breakdown of connection with reality.

THE SHADOW: The formation of a worldview in which the loss of the human within oneself ceases to be felt as a loss.

You begin to perceive the philosophy of "None of my business" not as weakness or fear, but as supreme wisdom and maturity. You sincerely believe that your inability to respond is "healthy boundaries," "energy hygiene," "refusal of toxic empathy." Anyone who asks for your empathy is declared an "emotional vampire" or "a person with no boundaries."

The company on the ship is not a random group of fellow travelers. It is a community bound together by a shared non-seeing. In such a group, an unspoken ban on "spoiling the party" operates. The one who first notices the catastrophe and speaks about it becomes a traitor to the common comfort. The group develops rituals (toasts, laughter, distracting conversations) that maintain a collective hypnosis. You find yourself drawn into a system where any response to another's pain is punished by social exclusion. Therefore, when tragedy occurs nearby, you feel not compassion, but irritation or cold detachment.

You begin to lose systemic thinking and a sense of interconnectedness. A manifestation of this loss is the illusion that the celebration on one ship and the catastrophe on another are in no way connected. You do not see how your well-being (ecological, social, economic) is linked to what is happening "overboard." You live in a world where others' crises are background noise, unrelated to you. The shadow manifests itself at the moment when the water finally floods your deck, and you find yourself completely unprepared, because "this couldn't concern me."

THE ACTION: You have already done the most difficult thing — you noticed that you turned away. Now you don't need to rush to save all the sinking ships in the world. It is enough simply to stop turning away.

Start with seeing. Then — acknowledging: "This is happening, and it concerns me because I live in this world." And then — make one small movement towards what you previously declared "none of your business." Not out of heroism, not out of guilt, but simply because you are once again becoming a human among humans. Not a passenger on a ship sailing past someone else's disaster with a glass of champagne and the thought "Thank God it's not happening to me!"

KEY IMAGES:

The company at the table: A community of mutual reinforcement; a space where anyone who "looks overboard" becomes a disturber of the peace and a "party pooper."

The sinking ship overboard: A parallel reality that is impossible not to notice, but one can consciously refuse to look in its direction.

Champagne, laughter, relaxed poses: The aesthetic of well-being, hedonism, and simultaneously a ritual of confirming normalcy. The louder the laughter and the higher the glasses, the more convincing the signal to oneself and others: "We are fine, and that is the only thing that matters."

The contrast between the warm light on the deck and the cold water overboard: The illusion of disconnection between "here" and "there." In essence, they are separated only by a railing — a thin boundary that can be crossed at any moment.

The complete absence of reaction: Systematically maintained non-seeing. This requires effort: one must not look, not hear, not allow the thought of a connection between one's own well-being and another's misfortune.

5. Here we are

"Each day is like the one before. I put the same record on the old gramophone. Worn out, predictable. It brings me neither joy nor sorrow. I like to rock to its rhythm in my rocking chair. So the days go by, one after another, week after week, year after year... You say the gramophone broke long ago? It doesn't seem that way to me... After all, something is still playing..."

5. THE RECORD

IMAGE: In a cluttered, shabby room long in need of repair and cleaning, a lonely old woman sits in a rocking chair. Beside her is a broken gramophone, mountains of books stacked in piles. Theoretically, an exit is provided — the door is directly behind the old woman. But to use it, one would have to fix the broken door handle. And the old woman is unlikely to do that, because she no longer remembers the door, nor the handle. Nor the world beyond this room.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the complete loss of the ability to act and to connect with reality, brought about by strategies of avoidance, isolation, and denial.

You no longer choose to remain in isolation — you have forgotten that there is an alternative. The so-called "comfort zone," which has turned into a shabby room, has become your only habitat, "familiar" and "safe." Needs, relationships, development — everything that requires effort has disappeared from your field of vision, because the very concept of "effort" has been lost. You do not seek a way out of this state, because the need for it has atrophied.

PRINCIPLES: The substitution of real life with the endless replaying of a single safe fragment; loss of the ability to act and interest in life; emotional and existential stagnation perceived as normal; deep apathy; the impossibility of independently exiting this state — the need for specialized help.

THE SHADOW: This is the loss of self that has ceased to feel like a loss. You have reached a "quiet harbor" — a state you once sought (peace, safety, predictability), but it turned out that the price was the ability to live.

THE ACTION: You do not need to try to get out of this state on your own right now. It is structured in such a way that it deprives you of the ability to see the exit.

You need someone to enter the room, sit beside you, and help you see what you are not noticing. This is not shameful. It's like breaking a leg: you can try to walk on it as much as you want, but without a doctor, the bone won't heal correctly.

Reaching out to a specialist is the first step toward someone helping you fix the handle. The door is there behind you. You deserve to open it.

KEY IMAGES:

The old woman in the rocking chair: The result of the "Comfort Zone" strategy after "half a century" of passive waiting and denial. Once, she was the girl from "The Flask" — young, with a book, resting. But the pause became permanent, and now before us is not a person who chose seclusion, but a person who forgot that there is anything besides seclusion. Rocking in the chair is an imitation of movement that has replaced real movement. It is an echo of the "Passengers": there it was the illusion of a path, here it is the illusion of life.

Book piles from floor to ceiling: An echo of "The Flask," but in distorted form. Books were once a symbol of coziness, a sensory pause, a return to oneself. Now there are too many of them. They do not nourish, but block the view. The inner space has become so vast that it has destroyed the outer space. Reading about life is more convenient than living.

The broken gramophone with one worn-out record: A metaphor for the automatism of consciousness — the gramophone is broken, but the old woman does not notice. She hears the record because she knows it by heart. Her thoughts, rituals, beliefs have long been dead, but continue to reproduce by inertia. The old woman does not listen to the music — she remembers what it once was. And she takes the memory for reality.

The broken door handle behind her back: A symbol of the loss of the ability to notice and to act. There is an exit, right behind her. But to use it, one must: 1) notice that the door exists; 2) recognize that the handle is broken; 3) want to fix it; 4) exert effort. Each of these steps was successively lost in the previous stages. "The Flask" lost the desire to go out, "Passengers" lost the desire to act, "Nope!" lost the desire to see problems, "Not My Business" lost the ability to notice what falls outside the zone of personal comfort. Now the door exists, but it does not exist for the inhabitant of the room.

Clutter, shabbiness, lack of repairs: What happens to a life when it stops being tended to. Problems did not disappear from being ignored — they accumulated. The mess is a consequence of refusing to see ("Nope!") and refusing to do anything ("Passengers of Fate").

The rocking chair: A symbol of the illusion of movement that does not change location (as in the "Passengers of Fate" card). One can rock all one's life and remain in the same room.

6. The Womb

"Warmth. Darkness. A rhythmic pulse. Nourishment arrives by itself, through invisible channels. No decisions. No choices. Only gentle swaying and the quiet hum of life, of which you are a part. There is no 'I.' There is only 'we.' And in this 'we' — complete safety. Boundaries are dissolved. Needs are met before they are even recognized. This is the state before the beginning of the world. Or after its end."

IMAGE: A pregnant woman gently touches her belly, in which new life is developing.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is the answer to the hopelessness of the previous card, "Here We Are." There, you found yourself in a room from which you cannot leave on your own. Here, what makes the exit possible appears: a space where you can catch your breath, outgrow, rebuild.

"The Womb" describes a state of deep therapeutic work, when a person is so exhausted, traumatized, or has lost themselves so completely that ordinary methods of "self-knowledge" and "working on oneself" no longer work. The need is not to learn new skills, not to change attitudes, not to "pull oneself together." The need is — literally — to begin anew. And for that, a place is needed where this is possible. A place where there is:

- warmth (unconditional acceptance, absence of judgment),
- darkness (no need to "shine," to be on display, to show results),
- rhythmic pulse (the presence of another that creates predictability and safety),
- nourishment through invisible channels (support that comes not because you earned it or asked for it, but simply because you exist).

This is a state before personality — in the sense that the personality as it was has been destroyed (or exhausted itself) and needs not repair, but new formation. There is no "I" in the usual sense. There is "we" — the dyad of therapist-patient, womb-fetus, in which new birth is only possible.

But the card warns: the womb is not the final destination. It is a transit space. To remain in it forever is to choose not birth, but eternal dependence. The therapeutic womb works correctly only when it prepares for the exit. The hands that hold must also be ready to let go.

Therefore, the card's central question: are you here to be born, or to hide? The answer is not obvious, and at different stages, it may change. But the very question is already a sign that the process is alive.

PRINCIPLES: A state of deep therapeutic regression, in which a person is given the opportunity to be "reborn" through a safe dependency on someone who provides unconditional acceptance and nurturing care; a temporary dissolution of boundaries and the personality as a condition for restoration where independent restoration is no longer possible; the dual nature of this state — simultaneously healing and risky, where the line between "being carried" and "getting stuck" is determined by readiness to emerge; a healing, necessary pause for restoring strength, rethinking, "gestating" a new project or a part of oneself.

THE SHADOW: The temptation to stay. Where the therapeutic space is intended as a temporary refuge for recovery and rebirth, the shadow turns it into a permanent residence. The person (or therapist) substitutes the goal of "growing and being born" with the goal of "remaining safe." Boundaries that were meant to be transparent and temporary become walls. Dependence that was therapeutic becomes a way of life. The healing card turns into a card of eternal childhood, where the price of absolute safety is the renunciation of one's own life, will, and separate "self." The question "are you here to be born or to hide?" remains unanswered, because there is no one left to ask: the personality has dissolved into symbiosis and no longer remembers that it once wanted to emerge.

THE ACTION: Simply — trust.

KEY IMAGES:

The womb as a space: This is not a card about a child, it is a card about the environment that makes growth possible. That which creates conditions, nourishes, protects, but does not rush or force. A metaphor for therapeutic presence that does not "treat" in the usual sense, but creates a context in which healing becomes possible.

The pregnant woman with hands on her belly: An image that works on two levels. On one hand, it is care and tenderness. On the other, it is holding: that which creates boundaries of safety. The therapist does not merge with the patient, but remains in constant, attentive contact. The hands are a metaphor for ethical holding: I am here, I hold, but I do not become you.

Ambivalence: The womb is absolute protection and complete dependence; source of life and absence of freedom; a place of preparation for birth and a place where one can remain forever. The card does not offer a unambiguously "good" state. It poses the question: are you here to grow and be born, or to hide forever?

The invisible work of formation: Nothing "happens" in the womb from an external observer's point of view. But inside — colossal, intricate work of creating new life. This is a metaphor for the deep therapeutic work that is not visible, has no quick results, but it is precisely this work that changes the structure of the personality.

7. The Why

"Here is the reason why heaviness feels light, and fear gives way to determination. I look at this fragile creation, and I want to step out of my comfort zone to give it the very best. For its sake, I will learn to look reality in the eye, to enter into dialogue with it, and sometimes — into battle. But I am no longer afraid of this. Because the Child has given me what the coziest, safest bottle could not: a reason to live."

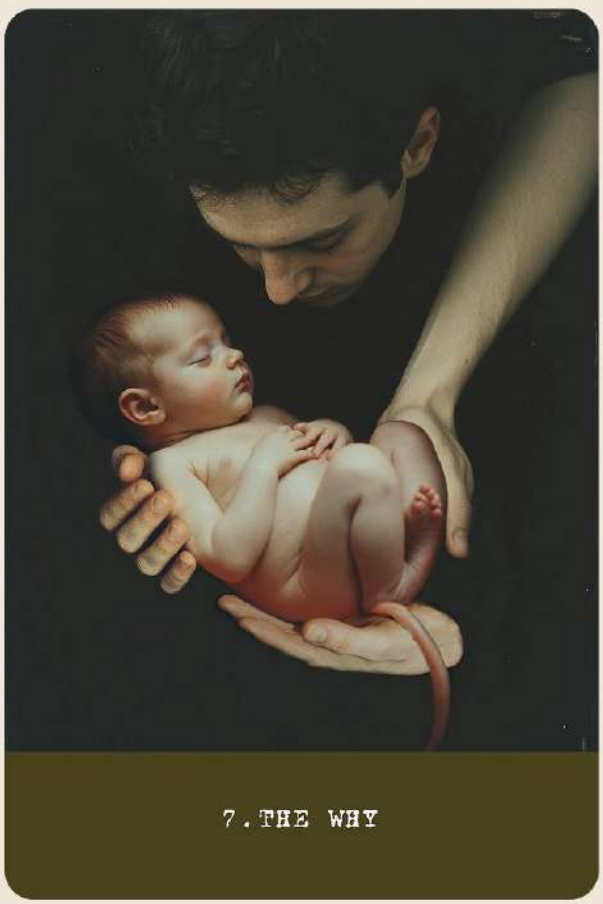


IMAGE: A man reverently takes his newborn child into his arms.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is the moment of birth. Not of the child — of oneself.

In "The Womb," you gathered strength, learned to receive, to trust, not to control. This was necessary, because the previous strategies (isolation, avoidance, denial) led to a dead end. But the womb is a transit space. And "The Why" is the moment when it becomes clear: what is worth leaving the womb for. Here, a key shift occurs:

- From "being held" to "holding." The person is no longer an object of care — they become a subject capable of caring for someone (or something) that is valuable to them.
- From safety to meaning. In "The Flask," "Passengers," "Nope!" and "Not My Business," the primary value was safety. In "Here We Are," it became clear that safety without meaning turns into a prison. In "The Womb," trust emerged. Here, purpose emerges.
- From fear to determination. The person has not stopped fearing reality. They have simply found something for which they are willing to face fear.

The card shows a paradox: what makes us vulnerable also makes us strong. The child (internal or external) is fragility. But it is precisely this fragility that gives the strength to come out of hiding. Because now there is someone for whom to endure the jolts, to engage in dialogue with the world, sometimes — in battle. The card says: to step out of your comfort zone, you don't need to become strong. You need to find something that matters more than comfort.

PRINCIPLES: The mechanism of liberation from the comfort trap through finding a significant reason that makes the exit necessary; the transition from passive trust ("being held") to active responsibility ("holding"), in which vulnerability is not denied but integrated into strength; the transformation of fear of reality into determination to engage in dialogue with it for the sake of what has become more important than one's own safety; the finding of meaning as a source of life, courage, and movement.

THE SHADOW: Substituting the reason, when you take on responsibility not out of love and reverence, but out of obligation, guilt, or a desire to prove your "normality." Then the exit happens, but does not become liberation — it becomes a new cage. Or when the reason turns out to be false, imposed, and one day collapses, leaving you without a foundation — and you return to "Here We Are," but now without hope for the womb.

THE ACTION: Find that for which it is worth emerging. Not in your mind. Not in plans. Literally — if it's a real child, partner, animal, cause. If it's an inner part — give it an image, a form, a name. Hold it in your mind for at least a minute, simply feeling: here it is. Fragile. Valuable. Demanding. Giving strength.

And then ask yourself: "If this is the reason, what first step am I ready to take for it today?"

Not all the steps. Just the first.

KEY IMAGES:

The man with the newborn: This is the transition from the passive position of the previous card, "The Womb" ("I am nourished, I am protected") to an active one ("I protect, I am responsible"). The shift is important: in "The Womb," you were held; here, you hold. The masculine image (not necessarily gendered, but archetypal) emphasizes action, emergence, outward orientation. But this action is not aggressive — it is reverent. Strength is coupled with tenderness. This is not "I conquered the world," but "I now have someone for whom to go out into this world."

The newborn: A concrete reason that makes the pain of leaving the comfort zone bearable. This could be:

an actual child (then the card speaks of parenthood as a source of meaning);

an inner "child" — a healing traumatized part that has finally found safety and now calls you into life;

a new goal, project, calling that has proven more important than comfort;

a future "self" that has yet to be built. Important: the newborn is separate from the one holding it. This is no longer the symbiosis of "The Womb." This is an encounter between two: me, and that for which I live.

8. Art of Small Steps

"Right now, the chasm between where I am and where I want to be seems insurmountable. The idea of jumping causes paralysis. But no one is demanding a leap from me. Before me is a bridge. And it is not so rickety after all. Many have walked here before me. I am not the first, nor the last. I simply take the first step. Then the next. I focus on the plank beneath my feet, not on the abyss below. Everything will be alright. After all, I am not the first. Nor the last."

IMAGE: A person carefully, step by step, walks across a rope bridge over an abyss. The destination is hidden behind a veil of mist. One could say these are steps into the unknown.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how to turn the "why" into the "how." It describes a method that works where "pull yourself together" and "just decide" do not. The method is based on several simple principles:

- Breaking down. Not "change your life," but "take one small step." Not "become someone else," but "do today what you have been avoiding."
- Focus on the process, not the goal. Do not look at the far shore, hidden in mist, but concentrate on the plank beneath your feet.
- Normalization. "I am not the first, I am not the last." This removes existential loneliness: others have already walked this path. The bridge holds.
- Action without certainty. Do not wait until you stop being afraid; start — and find your footing in the process.

The bridge is dangerous, but passable. And the only way to reach the other side is not to devise the perfect plan, wait for inspiration, or prepare for years. But to simply take the first step. Then the next.

8.ART OF SMALL STEPS

PRINCIPLES: A practical method for overcoming fear, inertia, and the gap between "where I am" and "where I want to be" through the discipline of tiny, manageable actions; transforming a paralyzing leap into a sequence of steps, each of which is achievable; shifting focus from the goal ("where to jump") to the process ("how to walk"); finding confidence through action, not action through confidence; normalizing the path by acknowledging you are not the first nor the last — removing existential loneliness by joining a shared human experience.

THE SHADOW: The imitation of movement, when the "art of small steps" turns into endless marking time: I seem to be moving, but the chasm does not shrink. This is the same trap as in "Passengers" — the illusion of movement — only in a more aesthetic, psychological packaging. The way out here is to periodically check the course: are these steps leading where I truly want to go?

THE ACTION: Simply — begin.

KEY IMAGES:

The rope bridge over the abyss: The method, the tool, the practice. Also a metaphor for the gap that cannot be crossed in a single leap. The bridge does not deny the danger (it is narrow, rickety, with an abyss below), but confirms the main thing: a passage exists. People have walked here before. This is not an illusion (the "cart" from "Passengers"), but a real, tested route.

The person walking across the bridge: Our "self" in the moment of active, cautious movement. The figure is tiny, the scale of the abyss enormous. But the card does not propose becoming a superhuman. It proposes becoming a walker — an ordinary person focused not on the magnitude of the task, but on the next plank beneath their feet.

The mist hiding the destination: The walker does not see the final goal. They see only the next step. This is not a flaw, but a condition for movement: if the goal were visible in all its enormity, it would be paralyzing. The mist is not an enemy, but an ally, allowing one not to stare into the abyss, but to focus on the plank.

THE EXCEPTIONALITY

What is this?This scenario is not about talent or genius. It is about the fear of being nobody. About how we try to break free from the grey mass, only to fall into the trap of our own specialness. These cards are a cartography of narcissistic defenses. Each subsequent card shows how the desire to be seen, to be unique, to be significant, turns into a prison from which it is impossible to escape, because to exit would mean becoming "nobody" again. But in the finale, there is a way out. Not through renouncing uniqueness. Through the ability to see another.

Structure of the scenario. There are 8 cards total in the scenario.

Cards 1 and 2 — entering the strategy. It all begins with two opposite poles: either you disappear into the crowd, becoming inconspicuous to avoid the risk of rejection ("Statistics"), or you make a loud, shocking gesture to finally be noticed ("Sensation"). At this stage, you do not yet know what your true uniqueness is — so you grasp either the safety of grey or provocation.

Cards 3 and 4 — deepening. The fear of ordinariness forces you to create artificial exceptionality. You take an ordinary "carrot" and frame it in a gilded frame, demanding it be contemplated, not eaten ("One of a Kind"). Then you create your own incomprehensible language, making others' lack of understanding proof of your depth ("The Statement"). You no longer just want to be noticed — you demand recognition on your own terms.

Cards 5 and 6 — dead end. You imitate openness but wrap yourself in barbed wire, because intimacy frightens you more than loneliness ("Let's Hug!"). In the end, you find yourself at a summit where no one can reach you — but instead of triumph, you find emptiness and a longing for the ordinary life from which you once separated yourself ("Solo Picket"). You have achieved exceptionality, but along with it, you have gained isolation.

Cards 7 and 8 — the exit. The scenario does not end in a dead end. You discover that value lies not in genius or in control over meaning, but in the ability to release a word into the world and allow it to find the one who needs it ("Simply Morning"). And then the main shift occurs: the focus moves from "look at me" to "I see you." Uniqueness no longer needs to be proven — it can simply be noticed in the one nearby, maintaining a distance that allows seeing the other whole, without merging or absorbing ("You"). This signifies an exit from isolation and the emergence of the capacity to form healthy connections with others.

Connection with the "Comfort Zone" Scenario. Leaving the "Comfort Zone" scenario requires answering the question: "Who am I without my defenses?" And here the next scenario begins — "Exceptionality." Because when you stop being "safe" and "invisible," you are faced with the need to make yourself known. But you have no experience of being yourself in the world. You don't know what it's like to simply be, without hiding. And so you begin to seek ways to stand out, to become special, significant.

Visual language of the scenario. The visual language of this scenario is a reference to the aesthetic of Federico Fellini. Here, everything is a little grotesque, loud, and absurd. His characters are people who desperately try to be noticed but end up ridiculous in their pretensions to greatness. Like a carrot in an aristocratic costume. Like a naked youth before a clergy conference. Like Dalí, who calls for an embrace but is wrapped in barbed wire. Fellini manages to look at this grandiosity with both tenderness and irony simultaneously — and in that gaze, as in the finale of this scenario, there is liberation: from the illusion that uniqueness must be presented, toward the ability to simply see another.

1. Statistics

"We are the grey mass. We are statistics. We are carriers of ordinariness. Our percentage is off the charts. Meanwhile, the personal, the colorful, the abstract — a collection of awkward gestures, so insignificant they don't even make it into the statistics. I chose a faceless suit because it's a style tested by time. You won't recognize me, won't distinguish me from the others. Pick anyone. We are all the same."

1.STATISTICS

IMAGE: A grey, faceless crowd moves along a grey city street.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about voluntary disappearance. About how you choose to be "like everyone else" because being yourself is too frightening: better to be unnoticed than to risk being rejected. Better to dissolve into the crowd than to stand alone. Better to wear a time-tested suit than to try something of your own and make a mistake.

PRINCIPLES: The strategy of being unrecognizable as a way to avoid the risk of being rejected, judged, or noticed; mimicry of being "like everyone else" as the highest form of safety; anonymity behind which lies the fear of standing out; merging with the crowd in exchange for the illusion of protection; choosing "grey" as a renunciation of one's own color.

THE SHADOW: The shadow of this card is disappearance. The person chose the crowd to avoid being rejected, but ended up becoming invisible. Now there is nothing to fear — the personality that could be rejected no longer exists.

THE ACTION: Find today one "awkward gesture." One movement, thought, desire that does not fit into the grey suit.

Do not present it to the world. Just notice: this exists. This is yours. This exists, even if it is not visible in the crowd.

Ask: "If I remove the fear of judgment, who would I be in this grey flow?"

KEY IMAGES:

The grey crowd on a grey street: A landscape where individuality is erased at the environmental level. The city, architecture, clothing, movement — everything is subject to one principle: not to stand out. Yet there is no aggressive suppression of personality here. Rather, there is voluntary dissolution.

Leisurely movement in one direction: Imitation of movement without a goal. What matters is not where, but with whom. The main thing is not to fall out of the flow. To stop, to go the other way, to hesitate — means risking being noticed, and therefore being vulnerable.

Clothing in black and grey tones: A uniform that makes you "one of us." Grey is safe. Colorful is dangerous.

Absence of faces in the frame: Anonymity. Faces are identity. And identity is vulnerability.

Statistics as justification: Intellectual defense. "There are many of us, so we are right." "The percentage proves normality." This turns the fear of being "different" into a rational philosophy: individuality is a statistical error, and therefore something insignificant and even suspicious.

2. Sensation

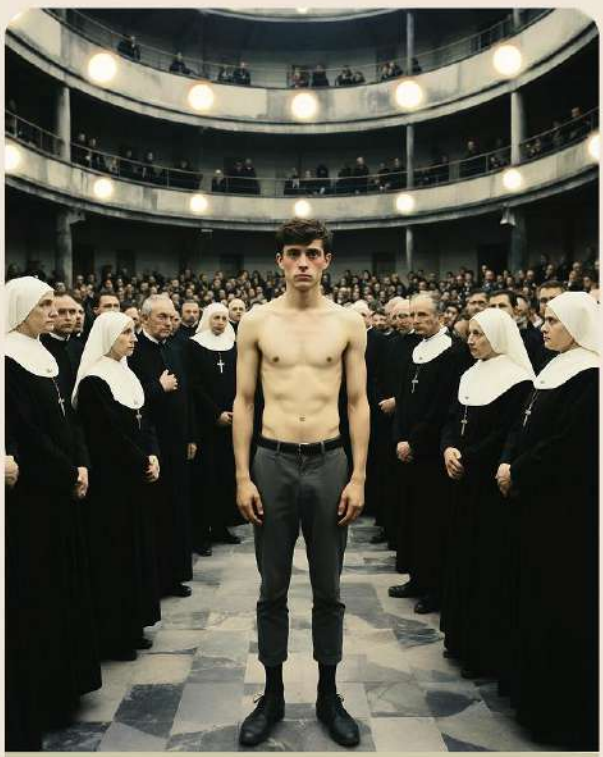
"Here I am! Alive, breathing truth! I await from you the shock of recognition and admiration!"

IMAGE: A young man, raised in a large Puritan family, dreams of somehow making a name for himself. He spent many a night in agonizing thought, and toward morning, he remembered how he once looked through a magazine in which guys his age displayed their tanned, muscular bodies before the camera, gathering admiring glances and lucrative offers to star in films. Without much further thought, he decided: why not go to a crowded place and expose himself? And so he did. True, he chose an unsuitable location: a clergy conference. And although he got attention, it turned out to be not at all what he had expected.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about an attempt to break out of the grey crowd that ends in humiliation. The person can no longer be "statistics." He is suffocating in facelessness. He needs to be seen. But he has no tools, no understanding of how to do it. He does not yet know what his true uniqueness is. And so he grabs at the only thing that comes to mind: do something loud, shocking, noticeable.

But there's a problem. He chooses a way that is not about him. And a place where his gesture cannot be understood. He goes to those who are guaranteed to reject him — because subconsciously he fears not so much rejection as the unknown: what if they accept him? What if he has to maintain it afterwards? What if he can't handle it? As a result, he gets attention. But not the kind he dreamed of.

This card is, among other things, about how the fear of authentic uniqueness makes us choose false ways of self-presentation. And about how humiliatingly an attempt to step out of the crowd can end if you don't know who you want to emerge as.



2.SENSATION

PRINCIPLES: A desperate attempt to break out of facelessness by violating a social taboo; choosing a mode of self-presentation that is doomed to fail with the chosen audience; substituting uniqueness with provocation; striving to be noticed at any cost, even at the cost of shame or ridicule; inability to distinguish between attention and recognition.

THE SHADOW: The shadow of this card is the reinforcement of the belief: "I cannot be seen except through humiliation." As a result, the person either returns to the grey crowd with a trauma, or repeats the provocation, intensifying the shame each time.

THE ACTION: Close your eyes. Imagine the hall is empty. No one is watching.

Would this gesture remain? Would the desire to undress remain? Or does the meaning disappear along with the spectators?

Ask: "Who will I be when no one is watching?"

KEY IMAGES:

The naked young man with reddened cheeks: A gesture of despair disguised as boldness. He undressed not because he is comfortable in his own skin, but because he no longer knows how to show himself. The blush shows he is ashamed.

The clergy conference as the setting: This is a place where his gesture fundamentally cannot be read correctly. He brought his "naked truth" to a place where nudity would be seen as sin, not as openness. But importantly: he chose this place. Not a public square, not a beach, not a casting — but precisely an audience that is guaranteed not to appreciate it.

The nuns and priests as the audience: A projection of his inner judge. Somewhere deep down, he knows he is doing something "wrong." And he chooses those who will confirm this "wrongness." Instead of seeking his own audience, he goes to those who will reject him — and receives a predictable reaction.

3. One of A Kind

"Behold this orange masterpiece! And don't you dare say, 'But it's just a carrot!' By doing so, you would only demonstrate that you are ignorant and understand nothing. Better to remain silent if you are incapable of appreciating the subtlety of its curve, the irony of its roots, the metaphysics of its green top. Your eyes are stuck in the world of function: 'to eat,' 'to use.' My task is to show that this masterpiece does not exist to be eaten. It exists to be contemplated. If you cannot see that, then the problem lies with you."

3. ONE OF A KIND

IMAGE: An expensive, antique frame, once found in the rubble of an ancient castle, originally contained a portrait of Julius Caesar. But today, for some reason, it holds a portrait of a root vegetable — a carrot from a farmer's garden. The farmer claims to have cultivated a new, rare variety that grows nowhere else.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the discrepancy between claims and true content.

PRINCIPLES: Substituting content with form; elevating a small, ordinary quality or object to the rank of the sacred and exceptional; compensating for the fear of ordinariness by exaggerating the value of an insignificant difference; using external attributes of recognition ("gilding") to mask the emptiness of content; creating a cult out of banality; aggressively defending one's "masterpiece" against anyone who does not share the belief in its exclusivity.

THE SHADOW: The frame does not make the carrot unique — it makes it ridiculous and absurd. The tragedy is that you do not see this.

THE ACTION: Take off the frame. At least in your mind. Look at what is inside. Without the gilding. Without the aristocratic costume. Without the pretensions. Does it really have value? Or is only the framing valuable? What if value lies not in being a masterpiece in a museum, but in being a living carrot — to grow and to nourish?

KEY IMAGES:

An ordinary carrot depicted in the portrait: An object devoid of innate uniqueness. It is not a "masterpiece," it is a vegetable. The problem is that the person cannot admit this ordinariness. They want to be something more.

An excessively luxurious, ornate frame: This is a defensive construct. The frame shouts, "Look, this is art!" so that no one notices that inside is "just a carrot." This is a metaphor for how a person adorns themselves with accolades, statuses, external attributes of significance to avoid confronting the emptiness within.

The aristocratic costume in which the carrot is dressed: A continuation of the same logic. This is costumed uniqueness. Not to be, but to seem. Not to have intrinsic value, but to display external signs of value. The costume is inappropriate for a carrot. As are many attributes of "exclusivity" for a person hiding behind them.

The "special" curve of the greens: This microscopic, often fabricated difference is declared proof of exceptionality. The person grasps at any little thing that sets them apart from others and inflates it to the size of "genius": at least something that makes me not like everyone else.

The contrast between the frame and the content: The gap between the person's grandiose claims and the modest, ordinary reality. The hero of the card sincerely believes that their "masterpiece" deserves this frame. They do not see the mismatch. Or they see it, but cannot admit it, because admitting it would mean that they themselves are not a masterpiece, but an ordinary carrot that can be eaten.

Museum-like, sterile presentation: Removal from the context of ordinary life. The carrot is not in the kitchen, not in the garden, not in soup. It is in a museum. This symbolizes the detachment of self-esteem from real deeds. The person places themselves in a space of "pure significance," where one need not do anything, prove anything, create anything — it is enough simply to "declare oneself a masterpiece."

4. The Statement

"Words are for the marketplace. Definitions are for catalogs. But I have created my own language. My gesture. My statement. Don't expect me to spoon-feed it to you. It is not obliged to be understood. Its value lies in the purity of intention, in the energy of the pencil's pressure on the paper, in the message's uncloudedness by utilitarian 'clarity.' If you stand there scratching your head — congratulations, you've failed the test! You've proven that you need a translator. And I am not a translator. I am the source. You don't understand? Then it's not for you."

4. THE STATEMENT

IMAGE: On a sheet of paper, a scribble is depicted in black pencil. In the bottom left corner — the author's signature.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how incomprehensibility becomes a refuge. The person has already been through the grey crowd ("Statistics"), the humiliating attempt to be noticed ("Sensation"), and the creation of artificial exceptionality ("One of a Kind"). Nothing worked. And so they choose a new strategy: I will not try to be understood. I will speak my own language. Those who don't understand are not on my level.

If before they wanted recognition, now they pretend that recognition is not needed. The misunderstanding of others becomes confirmation of their exceptionality.

But the problem is that a scribble remains a scribble, even if it bears the signature of a genius. And the demand to "understand for yourself if you can" is not respect for the audience disguised as elitism.

PRINCIPLES: Creating a deliberately incomprehensible language as a way to feel special; substituting meaning with gesture — what matters is not what is said, but who said it; the belief that if you were not understood, it means you are too deep and those around you are too stupid; using others' incomprehension as proof of one's own exceptionality; turning incomprehensibility into a virtue.

THE SHADOW: Loss of the capacity for dialogue, for contact. The result is loneliness disguised as chosenness. The person is so afraid that their ordinariness will be discovered that they choose complete incomprehensibility. If no one can evaluate me, then I am invulnerable. But along with invulnerability comes isolation. They find themselves in a void: surrounded either by those who pretend to understand, or by those who simply leave.

THE ACTION: Try today to say something simple. Without code. Without pretensions to elitism. Say "I'm in pain" instead of a metaphor. Say "I'm afraid" instead of an abstraction. See what happens to the one who hears you.

Ask: "What am I protecting with my incomprehensibility?"

KEY IMAGES:

A scribble on a sheet of paper: A gesture that poses as a statement. The author makes no attempt to convey meaning. On the contrary, they do everything to make the meaning indecipherable. Because if it were understandable, anyone could repeat it or evaluate it. But if it's incomprehensible, only "the initiated" will understand. This is a way to wall oneself off from the world.

Energetic, chaotic lines: Here, the form matters less than the process. "I did this, I felt this — and that's enough." Spontaneity substitutes for content. Emotion becomes justification, and sincerity becomes the only argument.

The author's signature in the corner: A very important detail. Without the signature, it's just a scribble. With the signature, it's a "statement." That is, value is created not by what was done, but by who did it. This is not about creativity, but about status: "I am the author, therefore everything I do matters."

5. Let's Hug!

"Oh my God, how wonderful to see you! Come closer! Don't be shy! I'm a simple, open person. Barbed wire, you say? What nonsense! That's just technical necessity. It establishes the distance needed for the proper appreciation of a masterpiece. But can distance ever hinder our love? Of course not! You don't need to touch paintings in a museum to love them. With me, it's the same. Admire me. Be awestruck. Take selfies in front of my dazzling smile. And let's absolutely hug. I'm aching for it! Ready to shed some blood? Just kidding! Hee-hee..."

IMAGE: You are in a museum. A gleeful Salvador Dalí greets you with arms wide open for an embrace. But don't be fooled: getting close to him will be difficult — his body is wrapped in barbed wire, and behind him, a statue of a menacing Zeus bares its teeth threateningly. It's as if it's warning that touching Dalí is dangerous.

5.LET'S HUG!

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the imitation of openness with complete inaccessibility. You genuinely crave love, admiration, and attention, yet you are forced to keep others at a safe distance. Beneath the mask of warm hospitality and open arms lies an insurmountable barrier — be it barbed wire, intellectual complexity, or hidden aggression. You invite others to admire you but make real closeness impossible or painful, taking pleasure in the mere fact of another's desire.

PRINCIPLES: Fear of intimacy; imitation of openness with complete inaccessibility; using "thorns" (irony, complexity, provocation) as a way to keep people at a distance; deriving pleasure from being wanted but unattainable; readiness to blame the other for trying to get close "the wrong way."

THE SHADOW: "Let's Hug!" is the pinnacle of narcissistic art. You want love so badly that you're willing to feign openness. But you're so afraid of intimacy that you wrap yourself in wire. You invite — and forbid. You beckon — and wound. You say "come closer" — and make approach impossible. Here are two main manifestations of the shadow:

· Pleasure in devaluing the other. You unconsciously choose ways of interacting that ensure the other person will inevitably "make a mistake" in trying to get close. And you get what you wanted: satisfaction from being desired, you blame the other for insensitivity or stupidity, and then you withdraw with a clear feeling of righteous superiority.

· Willingness to destroy any warm relationship the moment it becomes truly real and demands vulnerability. Provocation becomes your way to guarantee scaring the other off, preserving the illusion of control: "It's not that I was rejected; I created conditions that no one could possibly withstand."

Why do you sabotage intimacy in such intricate ways? Because inside you resides a terror of your own identity dissolving in contact with another person.

THE ACTION: Mentally remove the barbed wire. Imagine that Zeus behind you is just a statue. That no one is guarding your unapproachability. What would happen if someone actually approached you? If they hugged you for real? If they saw not the image, but you?

Ask: "Whom am I afraid to let in — or what am I afraid of in myself?"

KEY IMAGES:

Salvador Dalí: A symbol of contradiction, eccentricity, and ambiguity.

Wide smile and open arms: The facade of absolute openness and friendliness. A demonstrative gesture inviting contact.

Barbed wire forming a barrier between the character and the viewer: A real, physical or intellectual mechanism of isolation. Unreadiness for actual physical contact. A symbol of conditions, reservations, complexities, and "thorns" that make the embrace painful or impossible.

Zeus behind him with a menacing snarl: A gesture of hidden aggression, where behind the smile lies a force that can strike. It warns: "Don't come closer," and "don't come closer or you'll regret it." This reveals the true attitude towards intimacy. Simultaneously, Zeus hints at a superiority complex: "I am not just a person, I am special, divine, and gods are not to be hugged."

The contrast between "come here" and "don't touch" — the main contradiction of the card. The person simultaneously wants to be loved and refuses entry. They need attention, admiration, the presence of others — but without the risk of real closeness. They revel in being desired but unattainable.

6. Solo Picket

"So here I've climbed. Beneath me lies an entire city. From here, everything seems so small, and people look like ants in an anthill... Rushing somewhere. It's so interesting to watch them. And next to me, not a single living soul, can you imagine? And suddenly I realized that I want to be down there, in the anthill. I want to be an ant. Chat with someone on the bus. Eat an ordinary sandwich in an ordinary crowded café. Be late. Rush. All of this now seems so unattainable, so complicated. How do I get back down now?"

6.SOLO PICKET

IMAGE: An eccentric red-haired girl, her face covered in theatrical makeup, has decided to settle on a rooftop. She has dragged all her belongings up here: a huge mountain of papers. What exactly these papers are is unknown. Perhaps they are her drawings. Or statements. Or diary entries. One thing is clear: they have now become a vast pile of scrap paper that clearly needs to be dealt with.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about the bitter paradox of exceptionality: the desire to rise above the world, to attain uniqueness, and to stand on an unattainable height turns not into triumph, but into isolation. You have achieved "greatness," but instead of joy, you find emptiness and a longing for the ordinary human life from which you once separated yourself. Your exceptionality, embodied in theatrical makeup and a mountain of statements, has proven fruitless: no one understood your language, dialogue did not materialize, and the way back seems incomprehensible. The card speaks of the moment when you realize that you paid too high a price for your uniqueness — connection with others and the very feeling of life.

PRINCIPLES: A state of detachment from simple, ordinary human reality, perceived as loss; the realization that the attained "peak" severs connection, context, and meaning, turning into a trap; the realization that strategies of linguistic exceptionality have led not to recognition, but to isolation.

THE SHADOW: The shadow of this card is the risk of the pendulum swing. Realizing that uniqueness has led to loneliness, you might draw a radical conclusion: "Then I must become like everyone else." You renounce your individuality, wash off the makeup, throw away the papers, and return to the grey crowd. But this is not a way out; it is a repetition of the first card of the scenario — only now with bitterness and the conviction that being oneself "doesn't work." Instead of seeking balance between uniqueness and connection with others, you choose a new extreme, which is just as far from authentic life as the old one.

THE ACTION: Look down. Not with longing — with curiosity. What is there, in that ordinary life, that you don't have at the summit? What did you lose while climbing up? Don't jump. Don't descend. Just look.

Ask: "What do I want for myself from 'that life'?"

KEY IMAGES:

The rooftop: A place from which everything is visible, but no one "sees you," because from the distance you have placed between yourself and the rest of the world, you are simply impossible to make out. This is the final point of a route that began with "Statistics." You wanted to break out of the grey crowd, to become special, noticeable. You went through provocation, the creation of artificial uniqueness, an incomprehensible language, the image of an unattainable genius. And here you are at the summit, beyond which there is no next step.

The solitary girl: The final product of strategies of exceptionality: you have achieved exceptionality, but along with it, you have gained isolation.

Theatrical makeup creating a mask: A symbol of the impossibility of stepping out of the persona even when no one is watching. You are alone on the rooftop. No one is looking at you. Yet you are still in makeup. Because you no longer know how to take it off.

Red hair: A reference to the "One of a Kind" card.

The mountain of scrap paper: A mountain of statements that never grew into dialogue because they were not intended to be understood. A reference to the "Statement" card.

The city below: Ordinary life, now become unattainable and indistinct.

7. Simply Morning

"I'm walking down the street early in the morning. In the crowd, I'm very easy to recognize: I'm smiling. Because life is beautiful, like a painting or a movie. People are rushing about their business. Car horns sound, and at the same time, birds are singing. Someone's laughter, then shouting. Then laughter again. The smell of coffee from a café. A young street sweeper dances with his broom, humming to himself. The local Luciano Pavarotti. Suddenly, he comes across something in a pile of trash. He looks closely. It seems as if something has just touched him to the depths of his soul. I watch him unnoticed: he has read my statement. And he understood it. Took it to heart, so to speak. Strange thing: I threw it away, and he picked it up. How nice it is sometimes to meet a kindred spirit."

IMAGE: In Rome, something special always happens in the mornings. Perhaps it doesn't seem too significant. But that's only at first glance. Today, for example, a local street sweeper decided to apply to a conservatory. And all because he saw a Sign in a pile of trash. That sign was merely a scrap of paper on which only one phrase remained, torn from its context: "...go after your dream." No one knows what came before. Or what came after. It doesn't matter at all — everyone understands it in their own way.

7. SIMPLY MORNING

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about how value cannot be imposed. One can only release a word into the world, and then it will find the one who needs it on its own. And often not where you expected, and not in the way you intended. Because true value is determined neither by the genius of the author nor by the genius of the work. A person can pour their soul into a great work and remain misunderstood. But a random scrap of that same work, torn from its context, can change someone's life — because another person sees in it not the author's intent, but a response to their own.

PRINCIPLES: An ecologically sound exit from the strategy of "exceptionality" through understanding that: meaning does not belong to the author; the message lives its own life and will itself find the one ready to receive it; value lies in the ability to resonate within a soul; replacing exceptionality with living connection; releasing control over meaning; what seemed like trash becomes a sign, and chance coincidence turns into providence.

THE SHADOW: The main shadow manifestation is the illusion that connection happens on its own, without effort. In the card, there is a risk of romanticizing passivity: the hero threw their statement in the trash, did nothing to be heard, and by chance, it found its recipient. The street sweeper simply swept the street, wasn't looking for anything — and a sign came to him. The shadow here lies in the temptation to passively wait for "chance" or "fate" to bring recognition and connection without any effort.

THE ACTION: Go out into the world. Do your thing — like the street sweeper with his broom, dancing and humming. Be present. Openness and presence matter more than genius and exceptionality.

KEY IMAGES:

People rushing somewhere in the morning: Life that flows on its own, without pretensions to exceptionality.

The street sweeper: The addressee that cannot be planned. A message thrown out as trash finds not someone who was seeking depth, but someone who was simply nearby and happened to be ready to see. The street sweeper does not try to be special, does not demand attention, simply lives. And it is precisely this unguarded openness that allows him to notice what hundreds of others passed by: a scrap of a phrase that changes his life. He symbolizes that the value of a statement lies not in the genius of the author nor in the solemnity of the moment, but in its ability to resonate within a random passerby going about their ordinary business.

Fragments of a gilded frame: Remains of the "One of a Kind" card.

Orange wig: Remains of the previous card.

Scraps of paper: What remains of the mountain of scrap paper from the previous card.

8. You

"Subtleties, details, quirks — these are what make you who you are. I recognize you by them. I don't need you to be somehow perfect, somehow exceptional in the loud sense of the word. What I mean to say is that for me, you are one of a kind. I love recognizing you and studying you, immersing myself in this miracle with tenderness and care. And yet, even if you were not one of a kind, but were like your sisters, identical in every way, I would still recognize you. I'm somehow certain of it..."

8. YOU

IMAGE: A silent meeting of two different people who have somehow "caught" each other's attention.

WHAT THIS CARD IS ABOUT: This card is about a mature encounter, where the value of another person is revealed not through grand achievements or demonstrations of exceptionality, but through quiet and tender attention to their authenticity. Here, uniqueness is not something that needs to be presented to the world to earn recognition, but something that can be discerned in an ordinary moment, when two people stop demanding attention for themselves and begin to truly see one another. For the first time in the entire narrative, the hero steps out of the frame of their own solitude — not to merge with another or possess them, but simply to be near, maintaining a distance that allows seeing the whole. This is the moment when the performance ends and dialogue becomes possible.

PRINCIPLES: Transition from "look at me" to "I see you"; uniqueness does not need to be proven — it can simply be noticed in another; the encounter of two whole worlds without merging or absorption.

THE SHADOW: The shadow of this card lies in the illusion that simply "seeing" the other is enough for an encounter to take place. Behind the tender "I recognize you" may hide a subtle form of possession: the hero claims the right to define who the other is, depriving them of complexity, changeability, and the right not to live up to that vision. Instead of dialogue, a situation arises where one "gives" the other a sense of uniqueness while remaining in the position of connoisseur and appreciator, rather than an equal participant in the meeting. True "I see you" is impossible without readiness to hear in response: "Do you see me as I know myself to be?"

THE ACTION: Look down. Not with longing — with curiosity. What is there, in that ordinary life, that you don't have at the summit? What did you lose while climbing up? Don't jump. Don't descend. Just look.

Ask: Look, but do not possess, do not fill in the gaps, do not ascribe. Seeing another is an art that requires humility.

KEY IMAGES:

A man and a woman: Two whole worlds opening to each other. This is not a couple in a romantic sense, but simply Two. Others. Those who are not "me." A symbol that the exit from the narcissistic trap is possible only through acknowledging the reality of another person.

An empty frame without a bottom bar: A relic of the old paradigm, now become unnecessary. This is a direct reference to "One of a Kind," but now it stands empty. A sign that the need to exhibit oneself (or one's "carrot") as a unique exhibit has been exhausted.

Eye-to-eye gaze: The first genuine contact. Not a summons of "look at me" (Sensation), not the claim of "you don't understand" (The Statement), not a simulation of embraces through barbed wire (Let's Hug!), not longing for a departed life (Solo Picket). But simply — two people seeing each other.

Absence of physical contact (embraces, touching): The principled preservation of distance and wholeness. Uniqueness is recognized at a distance sufficient to see the other whole, without dissolving into them or possessing them as an object.

The mature age of the figures: A sign of maturity and awareness, a rejection of the infantile game of self-worth in favor of dialogue.

SOMA

What is this?Soma is not a scenario. It is a portrait gallery of emotions that have become lodged in our bodies. What they might look like if they were real people, with their own stories. Some of the cards have real-life prototypes. For example, Anne Frank, the girl who kept a diary in hiding during the Holocaust and described the state of complete powerlessness in the face of inevitable fate. Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jewish woman whose diaries captured the ability to preserve humanity in a concentration camp and the pain of losing an entire world. Tsutomu Yamaguchi, a man who survived both atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and became a living witness to what terror is.

It seems to me that it is much easier to accept the fact that there is "something" inside you, but you don't know what it is. That is frightening. But when that "something" acquires a face and, even if small, a biography, a kind of compassion and understanding seems to open up within you toward what previously seemed like a problem. Because now you know that this "problem" has a tangible cause.

There are 8 cards in Soma in total. Six of them are about destructive emotions. And two are about resource states, which, fortunately, we also have within us.

A little history. At first, I did not intend to create this section. It never even occurred to me that it was important to reflect such a component of the Northern Path system as stuck emotions. But once, during a period of active work on the oracle, I was returning from visiting my father. We had a terrible argument. And the whole way back, I could not calm down — it felt as if there was literally some kind of maniac inside me, ready to pounce on anyone who came within reach. I decided to describe his image to the image generation AI I was working with. And that is how Tom appeared. A maniac. But in reality, a very unhappy person who had experienced great injustice done to him. Can you imagine, I sat there, nearly crying — I felt so sorry for Tom...

1. Tom. Rage

"My name is Tom. I am your rage. I cannot be tamed, bribed, or intimidated.

Long ago, I came to protect you. You most likely no longer remember the reason. But I haven't forgotten: there was injustice, violence, humiliation. And I came to say 'no.'

The trouble is, I was suppressed. Denied an outlet. And now I am like a soldier's ghost — forever bound to the battlefield. Though the war ended long ago.

Sometimes I break out. I don't need much: any pressure, the slightest control, a mocking word. And there I am, exploding inside you like a nuclear bomb.

I know how heavy it is to carry me inside. You might think I am your 'dark side,' your 'demon,' your 'problem.' But I have a Reason. And if you dig to the core, I am just retribution that never found its intended target."

2. Anna. Powerlessness

"My name is Anna. I am that very silence that once saved your life.

I switched off everything in you that could be switched off. Feelings, will, the ability to resist, even pain. I emptied you to the very bottom so that you could continue to exist in conditions that could not be changed and from which there was no escape. If you had continued to feel the full weight of pain and pressure, you would not have survived. And I made sure that you did survive. That you would at least simply be, without wasting energy on a struggle that was futile. To do that, I had to make you stop caring.

I did my job. But for some reason, I couldn't leave. And now I am like that unfortunate passenger who sits forever in the waiting room because their train keeps getting delayed. So I am still with you. You feel my presence when you are told to 'pull yourself together,' 'get a grip,' 'don't fall apart.' And I come to you, put a hand on your shoulder, and quietly say: 'Don't. Just freeze. This is safer.'

I mean well, out of old habit. And suddenly you feel so heavy: any movement seems impossible. And inside — emptiness again, yet with a strange sense of relief.

I want to tell you that you are not a weak person. It's just that you lived too long in conditions that were unbearable."

Prototype of Anne Frank

3. Yamaguchi. Terror

«My name is Yamaguchi. I am that very flash that once saved your life.

I instantly paralyzed your body, shut down everything unnecessary, and seared into your memory a deadly danger, so that you would have at least some chance to remain unnoticed, not to worsen the situation with movement, and never again approach the source of the threat.

I did my job. But I couldn't leave. Because, alas, I do not pass without a trace.

Sometimes I remind you of myself at the most inopportune moment, like a fire alarm that starts wailing at the smell of cigarette smoke. You feel me as a racing heart, frozen breath, inexplicable anxiety, nightmares.

Sometimes it can escalate to panic attacks.

You suffer because of me, I know. Anyone would suffer. You think something is wrong with you. After all, there is no danger, yet you live as if there is... But everything is as it should be. It's just that you never had time to live through me and let go. And I always leave such a mark...

I want you to know: I don't come to torment you. I come to let you know that I still cannot turn myself off.»

Prototype of Tsutomu Yamaguchi

4. Rita. Shame

«My name is Rita. I am your fear of being seen.

I was born in that moment when you were caught off guard and your "nakedness" met not love and acceptance, but judgment: "Something here isn't right."

And then I appeared — the one who strives to disappear, along with this incomprehensible "flaw." Yet I don't even know exactly what this flaw is. What makes me so unfit for the world? Why was I rejected? Why?!

You feel me as heat. Red spots on your cheeks. The desire to cover yourself with your hands, to hunch your shoulders, to become smaller. To disappear.

I know how painful this is.

But I want you to know: I am not here because something is wrong with you. I am here because once you were too vulnerable and did not receive protection.»

5. Etty. Pain

«My name is Etty. I appeared in that moment when the shockwave of loss passed through you. I am the unhealing wound, the breach in the fabric of your being left by the one who formed its foundation and then departed forever.

But do not call me emptiness. Because within me there is memory, and love. And the longing for a meeting, and the impossibility of it ever taking place. But the one to whom they are intended is no more.

Since then, your world no longer holds together. I do not allow it that possibility, because I come to you already at dawn, in that precious second between sleep and waking, when consciousness has not yet had time to don its armor, and you are whole again—and then you remember.

I am with you until you fall asleep, until you lose yourself in oblivion.

But sometimes I come even in dreams, in the silence of midnight, where my whisper sounds like a scream.

You try to cough me up, to drink me away, to talk me down. But you cannot. It does not work.

I am the quiet presence of absence. I am your pain. And I am stuck.»

Etty Hillesum prototype

6. Lola. Disgust

«My name is Lola. I was born in that moment when you decided to pay no attention to the disgusting, the intolerable, the unacceptable. Humiliations, coercion, unwanted touches... You told yourself it was easier not to notice than to constantly agitate your nerves. And easier than acting and taking responsibility for the consequences.

Is it, really? How can such things be tolerated? Since you refuse to say "no," then I will do it. I am your body. And I "spit out" the unacceptable in your place. Spasms, allergies, migraines, stomach disorders. This is my way of saying "No!"

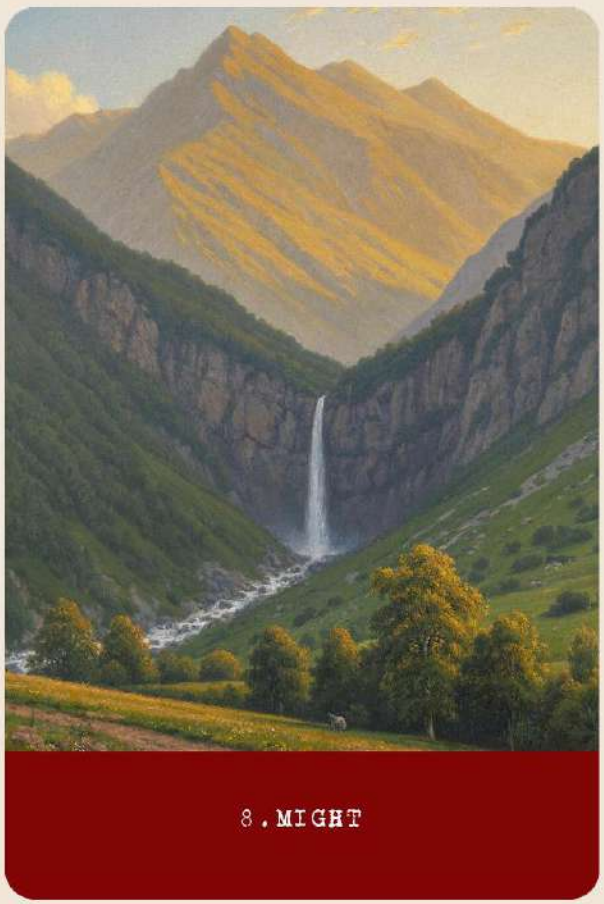
This is not illness, not a malfunction. I simply feel what your consciousness prefers not to notice.»

7. Grace

«I am the state of inner silence in which contact becomes possible with something greater than yourself. I am the feeling that you are seen and accepted exactly as you are»

8. Might

"I am the fullness of physical and spiritual strength. Within me lies confidence in the flow of life, serenity, and power. The joy of being"



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